

It Runs in the Family

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Relationship:	Darryl Noveschosch/Technoblade , Jschlatt/Wilbur Soot , Alexis Quackity/Karl Jacobs , Alexis Quackity/Karl Jacobs/Sapnap , Clay Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)
Character:	Dave Technoblade , Darryl Noveschosch , Zak Ahmed , TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Toby Smith Tubbo , Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Jschlatt (Video Blogging RPF) , Wilbur Soot , Alexis Quackity , Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Karl Jacobs
Additional Tags:	Kidnapping , Violence , Jealousy , Non-Consensual Drug Use , Possessive Behavior , Obsessive Behavior , Obsession , Murder , Stalking , Fear , Police , False Accusations , Family , Sexual Harassment , Not between any of the SBI's, that is, Cannibalism , Emotional Manipulation , this is entirely fucked and pure angst im sorry, some fluff every now and then but rarely , None of the Sleepy boys are really morally or lawfully good here , Philza is seemingly a good dad but not really , Heavy Angst , tbh the only saveable one in this family is Tommy and thats like barely , Separation Anxiety , Insane Wilbur Soot , Tommy just wants a friend but really is going about it the wrong way , Jschlatt is a bit of a dick but he's still a good guy , please don't come after me fandom , Dead Dove: Do Not Eat
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It Runs in the Family

by [BubblyBee](#)

Summary

Small town life can be wonderful, with a tight-knit community, and mom and pop stores on every corner, but with people constantly going missing, and many of them turning up dead, it's hard to feel safe.

Unless of course, you're the reason for those people going missing.

Phil Drystan and his three sons, Techno, Wilbur, and Tommy, live just outside of town on their little family farm. The youngest, Tommy, is nearing his 18th birthday, and so will soon be joining in on the family 'business'. How exciting! Phil can't wait to see who he chooses.

(SBI as a family of serial killers AU. Lots of sensitive topics in this one, so read the tags carefully! They'll be updated with each chapter.)

Notes

Please don't come after me fandom, i'm begging you here ;u;

This fic is very different from my other fic, and plays with a lot darker topics so be warned.

If you're here and didn't read the tags, please go read them to know what you are getting into. This isn't a fic for the faint of heart.

From Past to Present

Schlatt's foot tapped on the concrete, impatient, as he waited for the bus. Being a bartender meant long hours and having to deal with cranky attendees- the bitter chill of the night nipping at his skin.

'Where the fuck is the bus?' He thought grumpily, shaky breaths leaving him. Why did he take the late shift, goddamnit?

'Because you're broke as fuck and need the damn money.' His mind snapped back, further worsening his mood. He growled under his breath, huffing, "Fuck this shit!" He dug in his pocket for his phone, dialing a number he'd known for years. He knew it was far too late to be calling him, but he knew he had a car and- well he was his best friend, right? He wouldn't mind...

It rang twice before being picked up, "Yo, baby-cakes!" A cheerful and all-too-eager voice rang through his cell and he rolled his eyes at the nickname, "Don't call me that. Wil, could you come to pick me up?"

"Ooooo- You're just in luck! You're at your work-place, right?"

"Yep." It wasn't strange that Wilbur knew he was staying late- he was sure he had told him about it at some point, "Bus is late and I'm getting quite antsy."

"It's no problem. I was just at the market- Tommy caught a bad cold from a kid at school and we're out of Nyquil."

"Damn, and I thought Phil never ran out of medicine. Tommy though- How's the little shit anyway?"

"Eh, you know him. Wreaking chaos and such- he's actually starting to pick up photography! Really good at it, actually- oh, I'm just around the corner, see me?" He turned his head to the left and grinned when he saw the familiar car, "Yep." Hanging up, he jogged down the sidewalk as Wilbur slowed down. He passed one of the other workers and they called out to him, "Schlatt? Thought you took the bus..."

"Bus is late, my buddy's giving me a ride!" The taller man glanced at the red car suspiciously. It was hard to see Wilbur through the tinted glass. Schlatt found it strange that he hadn't gotten in legal trouble for it, but it was Wilbur and Wilbur always knew the weirdest loopholes. Looking slightly perturbed, his coworker looked back to him nervously, "Alright...well, stay safe." Schlatt rolled his eyes as he opened the car door, calling back, "Will do!"

Slipping into the seat, Wilbur's voice rang in his ears. There was an off smell in the car- well, off to anybody but Schlatt- but he couldn't quite put his finger down in it, "Who was that?"

"Eh, just a coworker of mine."

Wilbur nodded, kicking the car into drive and pulling back onto the road. As they drove, he slowly recalled having asked Wil about that smell before. Him and Phil had gone hunting- shot a deer, and drove home with it in the back.

When they'd gotten home, the carcass left a terrible smell in the car- the scent of death. Wilbur had done everything to get the smell out- practically power washing the car's insides- but it was no use. The smell was always just subtly lingering in the air, despite Wilbur's attempt to mask it with pine

scents and other car fresheners.

Soon enough, Schlatt began talking about the difficulties and stresses of the day as Wilbur listened patiently. Eventually, Wilbur turned into an old dirt road and Schlatt grew confused, "Uh...Wil? This isn't the way to my apartment..." Wilbur hummed, something shining in his warm brown eyes, "I know! Your apartments are a bit far though sooo...I thought it would be easier for you to spend the night at my house!"

The bartender felt something making him uneasy creep up his spine, but quickly brushed it off. He didn't have anything to be scared of, so what the hell was his problem? Wilbur wasn't acting weird, this was normal. They'd done this before.

'He's just...being Wilbur.' Schlatt assured himself, taking a breath, 'Just...regular, weird as all shit Wilbur...'

Trying to lighten the mood, he brought up the one highlight of his day, "Oh! You know that Irish chick with purple hair?"

"Minx?"

"Yea! Guess what?"

Wilbur glanced at him with a playful grin, "Another drinking contest?"

"What? No-"

"Hah- Alright then, you got me." Wilbur said playfully. Schlatt grinned widely, pride swelling in his chest, "I have a date-" He choked as Wilbur suddenly slammed his foot on the brake, stopping dead in the middle of the road. He braced himself against the dash, looking at the other man in surprise, "Wilbur, what the hell man?!" Wilbur's grip on the wheel was so tight his knuckles were turning white, jaw set and body stiff with wide eyes, "You- what?" He sounded like the air was just punched out of his gut, voice shaky.

"I have a date- and what the fuck was that?!"

"You..." Schlatt grew concerned, reaching towards the other man, "Wil-" Wilbur wrestled his seatbelt off, "I need air." He snapped, opening the car door and stepping out. The other man followed, confused and concerned as he followed Wilbur, "Wil what the hell is up with you? I know you have some bad mood swings and all but Jesus that was-"

"Shut up!! Shut up I need to think fucking- fuck!!"

Wilbur slammed his hands down on the hood, head down and bangs hanging in front of his eyes, "You can't- I don't- do you not understand how this works?!" He snapped, hyperventilating and head snapping towards Schlatt with crazed eyes.

"Wilbur...you are scaring me...Wil!!" He called out, backing away slowly as he saw Wilbur pull something out of his pocket, a large grin spreading across the taller man's face. Wilbur's hand shot out, grabbing the front of his sweatshirt in a death grip. Schlatt thrashed, causing them both to tumble to the ground, "Wilbur fucking stop this isn't funny!!" He screamed. The headlights of the car casted their silhouettes on the road, dirt and dust kicked up around them from the struggle. Schlatt's brain was frantic, a million thoughts racing through his head. They were outside of town- god, was anybody who could hear him out here?

He fought against Wilbur as he straddled him, screaming for help as the taller man laughed, "You- You were supposed to be *mine*, and you will be- whether you like it or not!!" He roared, stabbing the syringe into his neck and injecting something. Yanking it out, Wilbur watched as the man

under him slowly stopped struggling. Schlatt's world spun, growing dark as his voice grew weaker and weaker- till finally, his hand dropped and all he saw was black.

=One week later=

The noirette pinned up another poster, hearing a sob from the brunette by him. He looked at him with sympathy, reaching out and pulling him into a hug, "Hey...it's okay Traves. We'll find him, I promise..."

"I knew this would happen, Bad! I told him I had a bad feeling, and so did Slime!"

"We can't give up hope yet. Someone's bound to see him, and my Pa is on the case..." He gave a comforting smile to the taller boy, "How about I finish tacking up the missing posters, and you call Cooper to pick you up. Go to the arcade, get some ice cream- just occupy yourself. It'll be okay..." Traves nodded slowly, sniffing as he wiped his tears with his sleeves. He walked off, sitting on a bench and calling who Bad only hoped was Cooper.

Bad looked at the poster, reading it over again.

MISSING:

Johnthan Jebediah Schlatt

Italian male

Brunette with brown eyes.

Age: 20

Last seen wearing: Blue sweatshirt, jeans, Yankee cap, vans shoes.

Last sighting: Vinnie's Bar & Grill

If you have any information, please call the police or any of these following numbers.

Bad sighed, eyes tearing up. It was just yet another missing person in their town- and he knew they'd probably just end up with another dead body to write in the obituary soon. He wouldn't tell that to Traves though- he wanted to give him some hope, even if it was false.

He walked to another building, taping up the poster when he felt eyes in his back. He looked over his shoulder subtly, a chill passing over his body as he saw an older man across the street watching him. Blond hair tied back in a small ponytail and green straw hat hiding his eyes.

'Traves is here. You aren't alone. You're fine.'

He looked away, taking a deep breath. There was a noise behind him and he turned again, eyes widening as the man was gone again. He shuddered, turning back to the poster.

Bad had a terrible feeling in his stomach- the feeling settling like a storm cloud over him.

He had the feeling that he might be the next face on a missing poster.

=Several weeks later=

The next few weeks were...strange. Bad felt like he was constantly being watched and followed. He no longer felt safe on his own, the way things were going with the searches and had even started keeping his pepper spray on hand. He didn't know why he felt these things, but he just...

No...Bad knew why he was feeling these things.

It felt like he kept seeing that man with the blond hair and green straw hat everywhere- as if that man was following his every move. In the store, at the parking lot, at his work, on his college campus- even once when he was at his house, he saw him down the road and started freaking out.

At first, he just brushed it off. They lived in a small town that wasn't that far from about five or six other towns. It could just be pure coincidence.

But then it just...kept happening. Over and over, it just kept happening, and Bad had grown increasingly more paranoid. He was just glad he didn't live alone, because at least that allowed him peaceful sleep.

His phone rang, and he looked at the text curiously before smiling. On the screen, in blue letters was a name familiar to him for years.

'Geppy <3'

Bad and Skeppy had been attached at the hip since they were small and had remained that way for years. Skeppy's parents were higher class, but they never really turned their noses up at Bad and were quite nice people. They were happy when Skeppy had asked Bad to live with him after highschool- after all, the house was comfortable, big enough for two, and they had both gotten into the same college. It had helped Bad save up for his first car with his low-pay job at the diner, and well, it was with his best friend- one he had a steady dynamic with.

Sure, they had their squabbles sometimes because Skeppy's behavior was...less than mature...but they were still best friends, through and through.

The noirette opened the text with a warm smile, but he froze as he read it.

"Oh no..."

=x=

The two had been at it all night, their fight loud enough to shake the walls. Words were exchanged that were regretful, hearts broken and anger exchanged as they tore into each other. Bad was sick of Skeppy's behavior getting him in trouble, and Skeppy being tired of Bad always taking the blame for his stuff then whining about it later.

Yes, they had fought before.

No, it had never gotten this bad.

Sometimes it was bad enough to make Bad walk out, other times it had them slamming doors on each other. However, it was never bad enough to make Skeppy kick him out. Especially not in the dead of night with nothing but his packed bag and wearing only one of Skeppy's oversized hoodies and shorts.

Now, Skeppy paced the wood floor in worry. He hadn't meant to say the things he did- he was stupidly angry when he had no right to be, and now Bad was probably somewhere shivering and cold and-

Dammit, he was *so* going to spoil Bad to bits when he got back.

Well, that was if Bad actually answered his phone. Skeppy had given him thirty missed calls, left him twenty-two voicemails, fifty four texts, and now had tried to facetime him four different times. It had only hit him about how dangerous it was for Bad to be going out alone at night when he'd glanced at all those missing posters. Bad had them tacked on his wall, trying to figure out what happened to all those people. He was focused on one in particular though, and that was one Johnathan Schlatt. Skeppy didn't blame him, either. They both knew the guy, real smart, could be nice when he wanted but otherwise was a bit of an asshole.

Those posters reminded him exactly why it was dangerous to go out at night. There were people going missing without a trace every few months, and even though Schlatt's body hadn't been found it was likely he was dead and gone already. Skeppy wanted him back home, before anything horrible happened.

As the phone rang for what felt like the hundredth time, Skeppy felt a wave of relief and joy wash over him as Bad finally answered. He'd never been so relieved to hear Bad's voice and see his face, heart breaking as he saw the tear streaks and the way he was shivering. It was a blur for him- the apologies, the promises, and plea to be able to come home that Skeppy granted in a heartbeat- but in moment's he was grabbing his keys to pick Bad up, telling him to stay where he was as Skeppy started running downstairs. He ran out the door, locking it behind himself before unlocking his car and getting in.

That's when Skeppy noticed it- when looking back at the face time...

That...that dark figure just behind Bad. He should have spoken sooner- should have screamed at Bad that somebody was just behind him or to run- but his voice was just seconds too late.

"Bad...what's that behind you?"

Bad gave him a strange look, "What do you me-" Skeppy screamed as something impacted Bad sending his phone flying out of his hand. It landed with a crack and skidded across the ground, and everything is going so fast as all he can do is shout Bad's name. He can hear the scuffle, the way Bad screams as he's fighting back and the impact of any hits he lands.

Then, his screams are quieted and it slowly goes silent.

The phone is slowly picked up, and the assailant is wearing a mask that conceals anything other than a pair of soulless eyes.

"What have you done with my friend you bastard?!" He snaps, voice hoarse as his eyes are blurry with tears. All that he gets is a small chuckle, mocking and quiet as the assailant purrs, "Don't you worry about a thing. This little angel is in good hands, I promise~"

His heart shatters as the face-time is ended.

=x=

There was the quiet tapping of keys, a cloud of misery hanging over the office as the report was filed, "Could you repeat the events of what happened back to me one more time."

His eyes were tired, unfocused and barely able to be kept open as he glared weakly at the officer, "I already told you this three times and my story hasn't fucking changed." He hissed.

"Son, I need you-

"No!!" Skeppy screamed as he stood and slammed his hands down on the table, metal chair scraping before falling onto the floor with a clatter, "I've already told you everything I know, now I wanna know why there hasn't been a single officer dispatched to fucking look for him!!"

"Mr. Devland, I'm going to need you to calm down-

"Why should I calm down when my best friend is either dead, in some psycho's basement, or- or even being tortured and raped!!" He screamed his voice hoarse, cracking and shaky, "I want a goddamn lawyer, you hear me?! If you fuckers don't get off your ass and start looking, I have the money to sue all of you!!!"

The noirette felt like a spoiled teen with the threats he was spewing, but could you blame him? He was desperate and on the last shred of sanity he had- Bad's screams plagued him, and he didn't understand why there was all this nonsense he had to go through just to get somebody to start looking. The door to the investigation room squeaked open, and in stepped someone painfully familiar to Skeppy. Someone who he knew hated his guts even when he and Bad were just kindergarteners with wild fantasies. Skeppy straightened out, taking deep breaths as he looked the taller man dead in the eyes with as much hate as he looked at Skeppy with.

"Mr. Halo."

"Skeppy Devland. Why am I not surprised to see you here?"

There was silence as the other cop stood up from his chair. Mr. Halo whispered something to him, and the noirette froze as he took out a pair of handcuffs.

"What? What's goi-

"Skeppy Devland, you are under arrest under suspicion of being involved with the kidnapping of Bad Halo."

Skeppy felt like he was hit with ice-cold water from that statement, gawking in disbelief, "Wha- but I-" He choked on his words as he was pulled from his seat, his hands being pulled behind his back as handcuffs were snapped on. He struggled, anger rising, "What the fuck do you mean?! How?!" Mr. Halo grabbed his arm and pulled him along, eyes empty and cold as he hissed out, "I always knew you were gonna get my boy in trouble you little brat- just wish I could've done this sooner."

Skeppy's stomach dropped as he saw they were heading to the temporary holding cells, his face draining of color, and he didn't know what to say. How could this be happening?

The image of those deep green eyes flashed in his mind, and suddenly he realized- had he been framed?

Had that man somehow framed him?

'Okay mother fucker...' Skeppy thought to himself as the cold steel handcuffs were removed and he was shoved into the cell, his rising anger drowning out Mr. Halo reading out Skeppy's miranda rights. He breathed shakily, willing himself not to shout at the man to shut up.

'Two can play at this game.'

=1 month later=

Skeppy straightened his tie, looking at himself in the mirror critically.

He hired the best lawyer he could. He knew he was innocent.

The only evidence of him being involved was the fact that his hoodie was at the crime scene with Bad's blood on it. It was dna evidence and it was enough to take him to court, sure, but it wasn't enough to prove he was guilty without a shadow of a doubt- as much as Mr. Halo liked to believe he was.

"Skep?"

He glanced behind him to see Dream standing here, softening a bit. Dream was one of Bad's friends, and thankfully he believed in Skeppy's innocence. Skeppy asked why he did- sometimes even Skeppy had started to believe he really was responsible, and he'd just imagined the kidnapping- and Dream's response was...honest to god, pretty ominous; "Call it a hunch."

Dream was well known around town- a common, friendly face. He seemed to know all the gossip and talk about town at all times, so if you wanted to hear about pretty much anything- you went to him. He had charisma and charm, easily getting information from pretty much everybody in town. The blond tilted his head with a small smile, jingling his keys between his fingers, "You ready to go?"

Skeppy felt like he was lucky to have him as his friend now too. He let out a relieved sigh, nodding as he walked over, "Yea...lets go."

=1 year later=

"Boys! Lemonade!" There was only a single pair of footsteps, and soon enough Tommy peeked his head in the kitchen. Phil snorted, chuckling at the 16 year old as he nearly tripped. The youngest of his sons quickly grabbed his glass, giving a hurried thank you as he gathered his stuff.

Phil raised a brow as he watched the teen stuff his camera and tape recorder in his backpack,

"Going out again?"

"Yep!"

"You just did yesterday." Tommy rolled his eyes, waving his father off, "Yea, but it's super humid and it rained last night, so I'm gonna go see what effects that had on my project. It needs daily maintenance, duh."

The elder chuckled before tsking quietly. He turned his back to the teen, going to the fridge and grabbing a plastic bag, "Alright, just be back before dawn." He checked the label, humming approval as he set it on the counter, "We're having steak tonight."

"By 'We', you mean me, Wil, and Tech." Tommy quipped as he slipped on his shoes, earning a cackle from the older man. He wasn't wrong- the steak was for his sons, but Phil occasionally had his own food. Without another word, Tommy was gone out the door- running into the forest.

Phil heard his phone ring loudly and immediately grabbed it off the counter, answering it as he walked through the house, "Hello~?"

"It's me."

Phil froze at the familiar voice, a grin crossing his lips, "You're calling to update me, I presume?" "Why else? I have better things to do, and if you weren't my uncle then I wouldn't bother doing this."

"I'm aware." Phil walked into the basement, steps creaking under his feet as his tone flattened, "Spill."

"He won the trial. Not enough evidence, so he's scott-free."

Phil felt his jaw tighten as he rounded the corner, past Tommy's chemistry set as he took out his keys. He pushed open the hidden wall to Wilbur's playroom, walking to the far wall to a locked door- past one of Tommy's dog cages and Techno's old baseball bats and play swords. He heard a soft whine from the opposite corner of the room and ignored it, knowing it was just Wilbur's pet wanting his attention.

"Is that so?" He slipped the key into its lock and opened the door, walking in as his informant continued, "Yep. Gets better too- he's gonna try and investigate this shit on his own."

Phil snorted, chuckling, "Yea. Right. Good luck to him."

"What are you going to do about it?"

The elder walked over to a minifridge in the corner, opening it and grabbing another bag inside. He glanced at the label and smirked, "Keep an eye on him. Let me know if he makes any...improvements." Phil walked back out, locking the door behind him as he headed back upstairs.

"That all?"

"Mhm."

There was silence on the other end before the other man hummed, "Right...Whatever you say, I guess." Phil noted the peace and quiet in the house, and sighed in satisfaction. He was glad they didn't have any animals.

"Thanks for the update. Much appreciate-"

Phil turned the corner and stopped dead in his tracks, frowning as he looked across the hallway into the living room. His second oldest son had his back to him, crouched on the couch with a much smaller body just barely visible under him.

"I've gotta go." Without another word he hung up, shoving his phone in his pocket as he stormed over, "Wilbur fucking Soot!!" He cursed, grabbing the taller man by his arm tightly before pulling him off the couch and away from the smaller male.

The brunette looked stunned for a moment as he stumbled back a bit, before pouting, "Dammit..."

The smaller of the three let out a whimper and immediately scrambled off the couch, darting to hide behind Phil, who glared sharply at his son, "Wilbur, what the hell were you trying to do?"

"Having fun!" The blond only frowned deeper, and Wilbur rolled his eyes, huffing, "Look, it's not fair that I share everything but Techno gets to keep everything to himself!"

Phil huffed, "You know how your brother is- especially with his toys. Sharing just isn't his thing."

Wilbur scowled, "Yea, well its stupid." he snapped, voice harsh as he glared right back at Phil,

"That's it, go to your room!"

"Wha- i'm fucking 20, you can't send me to my room!!"

"My house, my rules- off to your room!"

He snapped, and Wilbur shot the smallest of the 3 a sharp glare before storming off. Phil took a breath and turned to the shorter male, "C'mon, let's go make dinner." The elder wrapped an arm around his shoulders and led him without protest, ignoring the trembling of the other man.

He set the bag on the counter and gestured to it, "You know what to do. Let's get cooking, little dove~"

The smaller male eyed the bags of meat warily, biting his lip as he spoke up, "D...do I have to?"

Phil raised a brow, looking back at him, "Is that really a question you have to ask, Bad?"

Bad looked pale, eyeing the label on the new bag. He hated this task. He hated it so much, and he

wasn't in any condition to cook Phil's special meal right now- he didn't have the stomach for it.

"P...phil...please...I don't..."

He swallowed thickly, sick in the stomach at the thought of what was in the bag. Phil rolled his eyes, "You'll get used to it. Now, go on."

Knowing he couldn't talk his way out of this, he took a deep breath and walked over, looking at the label on the bag.

" Jason ."

God, he wanted to puke.

=x=

Tommy took out his camera as he approached his project.

Lord, in his eyes it was beautiful- in its own morbid, twisted and fucked up way.

The corpse's skin was decaying and rotting in a bed of flowers, bits of rotted muscle and skin tissue ripped away by random animals, one eye missing and a flower growing in its socket, fungus and maggots feasting on the exposed insides.

The humidity seems to increase the maggots activity and the corpse's jaw was beginning to be gnawed off, barely hanging there.

The teen lifted his camera, snapping a few pictures before swapping to his tape recorder- quickly stating the date and time before stating the body's conditions. It was a quick and easy process, and soon enough Tommy found himself heading back home.

As he strolled through the forest, he was alone with his thoughts- only hearing the chirping of birds and noisy buzzing cicada's.

He was 16 today.

Tomorrow, he'd be 17.

So he had 1 year left till he could follow through tradition.

Well, he could keep doing this for 1 more year.

But in 1 more year, he'd have something new to do- something so much more fun.

Tommy couldn't wait for that time to come.

=9 months later=

Skeppy stared at the wall of missing posters with tired eyes. He'd spent so many hours wasted here- sleepless nights, stresses, breakdowns, outbursts, all because of the web of mystery on that wall.

Aside from the wall and some file boxes, Bad's room had remained untouched since that night.

"I really think you should just give it up man..."

Quackity's voice rang through the speakers of his computer, "This is basically a cold case by now- theres no leads, no witnesses, nothing- you can't even prove why you think Schlatt's disappearance is connected to Bad's..." He yawned, obviously tired.

"It is. The point is finding that proof."

"Skep..."

"Q, please, I know i've got something here!" Skeppy sat up, head in his hands, "I can't just give it up...he's out there, I know it. He's my best friend, Q- I know that if he was in my place he'd be saying the same fuckin' thing..."

His body ached for sleep, bouncing his leg as his eyelids felt like they were being pricked with dozens of needles. He shook his head lazily, rubbing his eyes.

"If Bad was here, he'd be telling you to get some sleep before you crash." The other man quipped, "Ya look like shit Skep." He murmured under his breath, "Soy estudiante de derecho y estoy durmiendo más que tú, hombre, en serio..."

"You know I don't speak spanish Q."

"That's the point, dumbass."

Skeppy let out a weak chuckle and looked at the other male through their facetime call- seeing him toss a pair of heels in his closet, "Look, not all of us are exotic dancers who need to stay constantly fit and hot, okay? Some of us can afford to waste away."

Quackity wheezed, laughing loudly, "Ey man, it pays the bills and I like showing off, so it's a win win."

Skeppy hummed acknowledgment, staring at the posters.

A list of interviews was tacked to the wall with the photos of interviewees. People who lived in the large area Bad was in before he disappeared.

He paused.

"Wait..."

He stood up as Quackity spoke up, "Skeppy? Whats up?"

Skeppy charged and grabbed a photo off the interviewee's section, looking at it closely.

"Oh my god..."

"What? What's going on?"

"It's him."

Quackity was increasingly confused, "Skeppy, what the hell's going on."

"The guy who I saw kidnap Bad!!" He screamed, laughing deliriously, "This is him- I'll never forget his fucking eyes and this, this is fucking him!!"

"Skep-"

Skeppy's phone battery died and Skeppy winced, "Fuck-"

He scrambled to plug it in and turn it back on. Once he did, a thought occurred to him.

He needed to tell Dream.

=x=

Phil's phone rang and he picked it up. Before he said a thing, the voice spoke up.

“Skeppy found out.”

He tensed, eyes narrowing, “What? How.”

“He said he recognized your eyes. We need to get rid of him.”

Phil bit his lip, standing and tapping his foot. He didn’t want to get rid of Skeppy, but...

A wicked smile stretched across his face, chuckling, “No. I want you to grab him and bring him to me, that clear?”

“What?”

“You heard me.” Phil snapped, “Do it.” without another word, he hung up and gripped his phone.

He had preparations to make.

=3 months later=

Tommy paced his room, excitement welling in him. Tomorrow was his 18th birthday- tomorrow, he got to pick his first victim.

He already knew who. He’d watched them for years, only exchanged a few words but they were everything to him.

Tomorrow was the day he’d finally have a friend. Someone to keep, and share interests with, and crack jokes and do everything with...It was all so exciting and nerve wrecking for him. The rest of his family could see his excitement, and while Techno disapproved of it he didn’t care enough to voice it.

Tommy was ready. He had everything prepared, and he knew he’d strike with his brother’s help tomorrow after school.

14 more hours.

He only needed to wait 14 more hours, and then he’ll finally have a friend.

He could hardly wait.

Photograph's and letters

Chapter Notes

I just realized I put this down as a single chapter story, I'm so dumb I'm sorry- Anyway, I now have a category in my server dedicated to this fic, so come on in! I'd love to meet y'all and hear feedback, plus you get notifications about new chapters the moment it's updated!
<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

"Okay, ready!"

Quig looked up from his phone, eyes widening, jaw dropping as he took in the appearance of the other boy, "Wow."

"Wow?"

"Well I mean...it's a look."

"You hate it." he pouted, crossing his arms. Quig rolled his eyes with a loud scoff, "Nonono- I love it. It's a *cute* look, but just sort of...sudden and abrupt. I mean...if you were going for farm-boy look, then it's perfect Tubs."

Tubbo grinned, "Yea? Well maybe I was!"

"Perfect."

Tubbo looked at himself in the mirror and grinned. Over the weekend, he'd dyed his normally pale blonde hair to a deeper brown. He'd also traded his normal khakis and blouse for light blue overall shorts and a dark green long sleeve shirt- and honestly? He liked the look. It felt refreshing.

"But...feel's like it's missing something." Quig piped up. He walked over to the shorter boy with a skeptical eye, jutting out his lower lip while squinting. Tubbo let out a little snicker at his friend's actions, letting him circle a few times before he finally snapped his fingers, "Your bangs? Super long and constantly covering your eyes."

He looked around Tubbo's dresser top before grabbing something, walking over, "Sit still for me." He stuck out his tongue while the younger waited, moving his bangs out of his eyes and pinning them to the side, leaving only a few locks hanging in his face.

"So?"

Quig stepped back and gestured to the mirror with a satisfied smile, "See for yourself." Tubbo looked in the mirror again and a big smile spread across his face, "Aw! You used my favorite pin, too!" The hair clip he'd used was a little jeweled bee- it was like his good luck charm, "It worked with the outfit. Now, ready to go?"

"Yea!"

The two grabbed their bags and rushed out the door, chatting as they started walking to school.

=x=

The day started off...odd, to say the least.

Disturbing, at most.

First, he'd found a note on his locker that had a photo of him inside. The note was simple, just *'How are you today, bestie?'* in red pen. He'd figured it had been a prank from Quig at first, but Quig had vehemently denied and plus there wasn't any time he could have left Tubbo's side to have put it there.

The next thing was another polaroid. It was of him, again, but this time he was with Quig and Purpled at lunch- on his homeroom desk, more red pen on the back.

'Take a look at your locker for a cool surprise!'

What creeped him out so much was the fact that Quig and Purpled's faces were completely

scratched out, and he didn't ever seem...aware of the photos being taken.

"Mr. Benjamin?"

The homeroom teacher looked up at Tubbo, raising a brow, "What's goin' on Tubbo?"

Tubbo shifted uncomfortably, walking over to the desk as people piled in the room, "I...I found this on my desk. Did you see anybody come in before the bell rang and put it there?" He handed the photo over with the note and Mr. Benjamin looked at it with a raised brow before reading the note, "No, actually- and that's a bit concerning..." He hummed before handing it back, "Tell you what, if you find another one of these come to me. Or, if I'm not around, go to Mr. Alvaro and tell him you're concerned someone is stalking you. Sound good?"

"Yes sir..."

Tubbo returned to his seat in silence, quietly observing the picture with concern.

It...scared him. How unaware he was in that photo..?

It made him feel vulnerable.

=x=

After first period, Tubbo went straight to his locker- ready to debunk this. It wasn't a detour, really, he usually left his math and chemistry books in there and grabbed them after homeroom to go straight to Algebra. He quickly put in his combination and opened it, and much to his fear, there laid a small envelope.

He hesitated- did he even want to see what was inside it? What, would the next photo be looking through his bedroom window? The thought of it made him sick.

Before he could chicken out, he stuffed his math and chem book's in his bag and snatched up the letter, wincing as he shut his locker door with more force than he meant to. Tubbo hurried to Math, only really breathing as he sat in his seat. He tuned out the lecture as the bell rang, practically ripping the letter open. Tubbo took out the first item's- multiple different polaroids- and he almost gasped out loud as he saw the picture.

'That- there's no way.' Tubbo thought to himself, suddenly feeling like he was going to hurl. He remembered the exact day that photo was taken.

Last year, summer vacation. He lost a bet to Jack and had to wear a yellow floral sundress, sunhat, and sunglasses to the lakeside camping trip. It was a fun, hilarious gag.

But the only photos taken were from Jack's phone- and that was a group selfie of him, Jack, Quig, and Purpled on the sand- and Quig's disposable waterproof camera.

Yet these...there was one with his back to the camera, sitting in the sand with the sun setting over the lake.

Another was when Jack, Quig, Purpled picked him up and ran to toss him in the lake- he remembers he dragged Purpled down with him- and he was in the middle of panicking and laughing at the same time. He had shouted something about getting the sundress wet...

There was another photo of him sitting on the dock while chatting with a random camper who was a bit older than him- the guy looked cool, didn't have any friends to hang with so they let him join in, and Tubbo thinks he remembered his name as Ranboo.

He wished he hadn't lost the guy's number- he seemed great.

Quickly, Tubbo grabbed the letter and put all his focus into reading it. It helped that the handwriting was neat and in a straight line. After a few read throughs, no thanks to his dyslexia, he only felt further unsettled by it's contents.

'HIIII!!! SOOOO Fun fact: It's my birthday today! If you were wondering (of course you were wondering), I turn 18 today :) Today is really special for me, you know. Today, I get a special gift- you'll find out more about that later though!

Do you like the pictures? I only take the best, as a master photographer! You really are a natural shot, even when still being a moving subject, you can't ever seem to make a bad picture- that's really good.

I hope you like the pictures- consider them gifts. We're gonna be best friends, okay? Cuz' I said so.

See you in Chemistry :)

-T.I.D.'

Chemistry?

That...that was two periods away.

Tubbo felt like he was going to pass out. He put the letter down with shaky hands, trying to control his breathing as the room began to spin. He could just make an excuse, right? He did actually feel sick, now.

No- both his parents were busy. They wouldn't be able to pick him up anyway.

He'd...he'd had to go.

He just wanted this day to end.

=x=

As Tubbo walked to Chemistry, he purposefully stalled. He didn't want to go, really- afraid of what awaited him.

However, after much peptalking, Tubbo finally got the courage to walk in quickly. Willing himself not to look at the others in the room, he sat down and pulled out his chemistry book- setting it down.

"...Hi!"

Tubbo jumped at the loud voice, head whipping to look at his lab partner, "Uh...hi?"

The other boy was around a head taller than him, hair a more goldish blonde than Tubbo's natural pale blonde and eyes a more sky blue with pale skin. His grin practically reached his ears, eyes lit up with excitement.

"I'm Tommy. Teach switched people around, so now we're lab partners!"

"T...Tubbo. And- yea, cool..." He gulped, giving a half-assed attempt at a smile and a laugh to try easing his nerves, "Sorry if I seem a bit stiff right now it's just...just been a real weird day."

Tommy made a "psshh" noise while shrugging, "Your alright- I'm a bit more excited usual today myself, it's my 18th birthday." Tubbo's heart stuttered, unease creeping up his spine, "O-oh? Well, happy birthday..."

"Thanks!"

Silence settled between them as Tubbo remained on edge, the teacher speaking as he set up his stuff. He felt eyes on him and glanced at the other boy, seeing him watching him with interest. Tubbo shifted uncomfortably, whispering, "Hey uh...Tommy? Would...you stop staring? It's real weir-"

"Did you like the gifts?"

Tubbo's blood ran cold, body freezing, "W...what was that?"

"The photos, did you like them?"

He suddenly felt sick all over again, hands slowly beginning to tremble again, "You..." He slowly looked at the boy next to him, who seemed like he didn't see a single thing wrong with his question.

It felt like he was going to hurl right then out of fear- the person responsible for those photo's was sitting right next to him. Oh god-

Tubbo was quick to raise his hand, speaking so fast it was a wonder he didn't fumble his words, "Mrs. Noll I feel sick I need to go to the nurses office, please!"

The Chemistry teacher looked at him with confusion and surprise before slowly nodding, "Alright-"

Tubbo quickly grabbed his stuff and sped out the classroom, holding his stomach as he headed for the nurse's office.

He was going to fucking vomit.

=x=

Tubbo drank the cool water slowly, entire body shaking as he curled up against Quig's side. Mr. Alvaro looked at the photos with worry in his eyes, "And you're telling me there is nowhere and no way these photographs could have existed? For sure?"

Quig answered for him, "Nope. There's absolutely no way."

Tubbo held the glass cup like it was a lifeline, mind racing as he tried to piece together exactly why this was happening to him. Today was supposed to be a good day, not...whatever hell this was.

"Hm...I'm going to report this and try getting to the bottom of it. I'm really sorry it took me so long to get down here." He reached out and ruffled Tubbo's hair gently, "The dismissal bell will be going off in just a few- are you riding the bus, getting picked up, biking, or walking home?"

Tubbo gulped, chewing his lip, "I normally walk with Quig, but..." Quig winced, seemingly not liking the idea of Tubbo walking home alone, "But I have a dentist appointment, so my mom's picking me up..."

"Can you call your parents?"

Tubbo shook his head, "Busy..."

The older man looked unsure, and Tubbo let out a shaky breath, willing himself to snap out of it. He carefully set the glass down on the table, taking deep, even breaths, "Look I- I'll be fine. It's not that far and I have to stay for my club anyway." He shook his head, "Please just- I just wanna get this day over with- with no more worry."

"Tubbo, you have someone openly *stalking* you!" Quig protested, "Leaving you alone is stupid-"

"I'm not a child, I can handle myself!" He snapped in clear irritation, surprising both of the others. Mr. Alvaro and Quig looked at each other before reluctantly yielding, getting a sigh of relief from Tubbo.

"Thank you..."

=x=

His breath was strangled and shaky as he pushed through the agony. He practically dragged himself up the stairs as silently as possible, listening closely for the other's voices. They were outside- front yard, most likely preparing for something...

He strained to reach the doorknob, finally getting a good hold and turning the doorknob. The soft click was a blessing to his ears, pushing the door slowly open. He quickly pulled himself out and forced himself up, shaky on his feet.

He had the mental map, he just needed to make it out.

He quickly limped his way to the backdoor, opening it slowly and quietly. Taking a deep breath of fresh air, he sped towards the forest as fast as he could- not even stopping when he heard them realize he was gone. He kept going, the one goal in mind being to make it to town.

He pushed through the brush, feet numb to twigs and sharp rocks cutting at his skin.

'C'mon c'mon c'mon-'

His lungs burned as he pushed himself, body in agony as he didn't stop- he couldn't stop.

There was a whistle through the air and his breath hitched as a bolt struck the tree beside him. He heard a loud curse and quickly dived to hide.

"Schlatt, come on out~!!" Wilbur's voice echoed a bit and Schlatt struggled a bit to hear him over

the sound of his own heartbeat thundering, "Schlatt i'm- I gotta tell ya, I am right fuckin' pissed right now!" He cackled, "Normally i'd love to play this little game of hide and seek- it's cute, really- but today wasn't really the best day, my pretty princess~!!"

Schlatt could hear the fact that Wilbur was speaking through gritted teeth, continuously taking large lungfuls of air to calm himself. He heard the soft noise of the crossbow being reloaded and forced himself on his stomach, crawling under the foliage to avoid detection.

"Schlatt, you know it's Tommy's birthday and i'm supposed to be helping get his present! You know how important that is?"

'No, and I don't give a single shit.' Schlatt thought to himself, crawling further away. The further he got, the more Wilbur's voice faded into the distance.

"No? Well, it's *really* fucking important! Big deal! And guess what? Because of you pulling your little stunt right now, I'm missing because I need to wrangle you back home! So yes, again, i'm downright fucking *pissed*."

'Asshole...'

Once he felt he was far enough, Schlatt used a tree for support to pull himself up again- panting and shaking. His head was throbbing and the world under his feet felt like it was spinning, legs shaking.

However, knowing Wilbur probably wasn't far behind, Schlatt pushed off the tree and started running again until he reached a familiar marking on a tree.

The road.

He was getting close to the road.

He was getting *so* close to freedom.

Schlatt let out a shaky, wheeze-like laugh as he allowed himself to slow down a bit- not hearing

Wilbur anywhere behind him.

What a mistake that was.

Schlatt took one step past the tree when he heard the soft thwunk and the whistling of the bolt. His breathing and heart stopped, eyes widening as his body instinctually prepared for the unavoidable pain. A second too late, Schlatt screamed as the bolt struck his thigh- collapsing as fresh, warm blood flowed out the wound and dripped onto the soil.

"FUCK!!!" He cried, only receiving loud, cocky laughter in reply, "Damn, you really thought you lost me didn't you, babe?" Schlatt hit his head against the ground, gritting his teeth in pain as Wilbur walked over- taking his sweet time. He stood so his shadow cast over Schlatt, hands on his hips while his crossbow was strapped on his back, "Do you even know..." He lifted his foot only to bring it down on Schlatt's stomach, knocking the wind out of him with a rough wheeze, "how *fucking* moronic that was on today of all days?"

Schlatt groaned in pain, the bloodloss quickly getting it him, "G..go...FUCK yourself, Wil-bitch..." He managed to slur out. Wilbur dug his heel in with an unimpressed look, drinking up a whimper and tisking as he leaned over the wounded man, eyes roaming over him, "I'm disappointed, really. Thought you'd be..." He trailed off, eyes freezing over the bolt in Schlatt's thigh, "Thought...yo....."

Wilbur seemed entranced, mouth open as he stared, and Schlatt snapped, "Thought *what* ?!" The taller continued to stare, before slowly reaching for the bolt. Schlatt began to panic, putting two and two together, "Wil- Wilbur don't- Wilbur! WIL-" Schlatt was cut off with his own scream as Wilbur grabbed the bolt, muttering under his breath as he subtly jiggled it. A large grin formed on his face and he giggled a bit, burning spreading through Schlatt's leg as he tried to get free.

His hands scrambled until he grabbed the other's hair, roughly yanking. Wilbur screamed in pain, snapping out of his trance to rip Schlatt's hand out of his hair and letting go of the bolt. He growled and dove forward, hands wrapping around Schlatt's neck, "Do *not* fucking touch me, do you hear that bitch?!" The other man nodded frantically and Wilbur let go roughly, standing as he caught his breath. He looked around, as if bewildered by what was happening before rubbing his eyes and shaking his head- pacing a bit. He rubbed his face and ran his hands through his hair, panting as he whispered to himself, "Shut up. Shut the fuck up I need him- n...need him fucking alive I can't... fucking shit!" He shouted, voice cracking a bit. Using both hands, he pushed his bangs back and inhaled deeply, counting under his breath before exhaling. He looked back to Schlatt, giving him a tired smile, "Looks like you need me to carry you, huh? How sad."

"F...fuck you!" Schlatt hissed, only to cry out in pain as he was grabbed by his arm and pulled towards Wil, quickly being hoisted over his shoulder- trembling as he went limp.

"Let's get you home before you bleed to death, hm?" Wilbur turned back in the direction of the house, trekking through the thick forest as Schlatt came in and out of consciousness.

Bad was the one waiting at the door, worry and fear clear on his face the moment he saw them.

"Bad, get the basement ready."

"W-what did you do?!"

Wilbur rolled his eyes, playfully brushing past the other victim as he headed to the basement, "Crossbow bolt to the thigh..." Bad tensed, blurting out his concern, "Wilbur- that can kill him! If it hit an artery he could bleed out in minutes!"

Wilbur stiffened, a deep frown forming on his face, "He's taken worse from me before, so he'll be fine if you hurry it the fuck up!" He snapped suddenly, temperamental flare making Bad flinch back, "Now, are you going to zip that pretty mouth of yours and quit bitching, or are you going to fucking *make* me shut you up?" Bad took a step back, keeping quiet as he ducked his head. Talking this as an affirmative, Wilbur turned without another word and headed to the basement- clearly still steaming.

Reluctantly, Bad followed close behind- silently obedient as always.

=x=

Tubbo had lied.

He didn't want to walk home alone- not with the knowledge that he was more than likely being stalked.

So instead, he waited for his dad to pick him up on his way home from work. After most of the clubs left, the school felt...dead. It was an oddly unsettling site- not a single soul inside or outside the building except him...

Tubbo heard the school door's click open and he looked over- stomach twisting as he realized who was standing there. Tommy looked over to him and grinned, walking over quickly, "What's wrong, Tubbo?"

The brunette shook his head, backing away as the other teen approached, tone taunting, "You never did answer my question..."

"G-get away..."

Tommy's face suddenly twisted in confusion, "Why? I have-"

Tubbo jumped as he heard a loud car honk, looking to the street to see a family van parked there. The car window rolled down, a man with paler blonde hair and green eyes smiling kindly at them peeking his head out.

"Hey Dad!!" Tubbo watched in disbelief as Tommy seemingly forgot him, running to the car and opening the back to toss his book bag in.

"I..."

Tubbo's eyes met the man's, wide and confused. The man's smile only widened, "Tubbo! Aren't you gonna join us?"

His body goes cold and he starts backing up, freaked out about how this man knew his name, "W...what?"

Tubbo jumped as he backed right up into someone, "He was asking if you were joining us." A flat, monotone voice responded. Before he can react, a strong pair of arms wrap around his waist and he immediately starts thrashing. Adrenaline immediately starts pumping as he struggles and kicks, a loud plinking noise heard as something falls to the ground. He inhales, about to scream only for it to be muffled by the cloth Tommy shoves over his mouth and nose. His eyes are wide and panicked as he's squished, protests being shushed by Tommy as they grow quieter, darkness edging his vision as he loses consciousness.

After a few seconds, Tommy slowly removes the cloth- the smaller boy completely out, "Alright Tech, you can loosen."

As if on cue, Techno relaxes his hold and straightens up, changing Tubbo's position in his arms as they hurried to the van. Phil grinned, "Tie his wrists, put him in the front seat. You two in the back."

Tommy whined, "But I wanna hold him-"

"You're not allowed to have your present this early bud~" Phil sang as Techno grabbed rope from the floor of the car and tied Tubbo's wrists behind his back. He brought the smaller to the front seat- taking extra care to position him comfortably- before clipping on the seatbelt.

He climbed in the back with Tommy, silent as always as Phil started pulling out.

Then, Tommy noticed, "Wha- Wait where's Wilbur?!"

"His pet got out again, so he needed to stay behind- i'm sorry bud..."

"Again?!" Tommy squawked, frowning, "What the hell?!"

"I don't understand why he doesn't just break Schlatt's legs. It'd be infinitely easier." Techno piped up and Phil tisked, shaking his head, "Not all pets can be as obedient as Bad, Techno. Skeppy still tries to break out of the attic to this day! Wil just likes it when they run."

Techno grumbled, "He's just a sadist." Phil looked at his eldest son in the rearview mirror, "Tech, we all have preferences and you know this- you shouldn't criticize your brother."

The eldest huffed, resting his forehead against the window without retorting again.

The rest of the car ride home was silent, with Techno watching out the window and Tommy on his phone.

They drove out of town onto the dirt road, following it into the country before pulling off into a hidden path into the woods. Soon, it opened up into fields again with a small country home and barn, driving by rickety wood fences until finally pulling into a car shed. Pulling into park, Tommy was the first out, followed by Techno as he walked to the house. Phil was last, undoing his belt, getting out and walking to the passenger side. He opened the door and leaned in, undoing Tubbo's car seat and pushing his long bangs out of his eyes. He squinted as he inspected the boy, moving his head side to the side.

There was something...familiar about him that Phil couldn't quite place. Something that disturbed him.

Unable to figure it out, he shrugged it off and scooped the boy into his arms, stepping out of the car. He shut the door with his hip and headed to the house, hearing loud bickering from inside. He walked in to Tommy standing over Wilbur on the couch and Techno standing to the side,

unamused as always.

“You’re drunk?!” whined the golden blonde, receiving a small, lazy snicker from the brunette on the couch, “Yeepppp...”

“It’s my *birthday* , Wil! What the actual fuck!” Wilbur only responded with a shrug, slowly sitting up. Upon seeing Phil with Tubbo, he lit up and stood, “Oh! Ya got ‘em!” He gave a dopey grin, walking over with only a slight stumble, “Dad- daddy lemme look-”

Phil rolled his eyes, chuckling at Wilbur’s antics and letting Wilbur look at the knocked out teen. Wilbur gawked before giggling, “Ayyyy, my lil’ brother’s got taste!!” He slurred, only to yelp as Tommy grabbed his collar and pulled him away roughly. He narrowed his eyes at his older brother, “Back. Off.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes, raising his hands in defense, “Fuckin’ chill Toms, ‘m just sayin’ he’s cute okay? Harmless...” He grumbled in slight annoyance, “He’s aaaalllll yours-”

“He’s not- thats not why-!” Tommy let out a frustrated noise before snapping as Wilbur plopped back on the couch, “Go fuck your goddamn voodoo doll, Wil! Ugh!” He stormed off and Techno watched after him, seemingly conflicted. Phil sighed, “What am I gonna do with that one...Wil-” “Yea yea,” Wilbur grabbed a half empty bottle of vodka from on top of the table, taking a swig as he waved Phil off. He sighed and laid back, bringing his forearm over his eyes, “Schlatt’s back in the basement. Techno your crossbow is back in your room.”

“I’m inclined to think you’re lying, since that’d be the first time you’ve actually willingly returned one of my weapons.” Techno snarked, crossing his arms. Wilbur huffed and flicked him off, earning an eye roll from his older brother. Tisking, Phil shook his head and began walking out of the room, “I’ll be setting up Tommy’s gift in his room, so hopefully he isn’t in there.”

The eldest looked around before narrowing his eyes on Wilbur, “Wil, where’s my angel?”

“Songbird’s in the basement fixin’ up Schlatt, Hercules. Now fuck off, ‘ve gotta headache.”

Techno growled under his breath before walking off, heading to the basement without protest. He opened the door and headed downstairs, the wooden stairs under his feet creaking loudly from his weight. Bad’s voice was soft as he talked to Schlatt, and as Techno turned the corner he could see Schlatt laying on a couch with one leg resting in Bad’s lap, the other on the floor chained to a bar under the couch.

“I can’t believe he shot you with a bolt- goodness, at this rate you’ll need another blood transfusion...” Bad’s eyebrows were knitted together as his eyes focused on the entrance wound, pinching the skin together as more blood dripped out while he stitched. His longish black hair was pulled back into a messy ponytail, hands steady as possible while he worked. Schlatt let out a whine of pain, face twisted in agony as beads of sweat ran down his forehead, “God- Fffff-” he

gritted his teeth, “Ca- can I swear?”

Bad snorted, a small smile tugging at his lips as he briefly glanced at Schlatt, “Right now i’ll allow it.”

“Good. Because this holy shit this fucking hurts like a goddamn *bitch* !” He shouted before biting his knuckle in pain. Unable to contain himself, Bad let out a sputtered laugh that he quickly covered up- clearly amused by the outburst. Schlatt peeked at him before letting out a weak, shaky chuckle. Techno smiled a bit, shaking his head. Schlatt was...amusing to say the least. He was an annoyed, dickish bastard, but he never failed to put a smile on Bad’s face. As much as he wanted to bash his skull in most of the time, he amused Bad and that was the only thing Techno valued him for.

Like a Jester.

He walked over, “Angel?”

Bad and Schlatt both jumped and Bad’s face reddened as Schlatt frowned. Bad cleared his throat, looking back to the wound and focusing again, “Techno...welcome home...”

“Mhm...so, what did Wilbur do this time?”

“Crossbow bolt through the thigh. He...he could’ve hit an artery.”

“Hm.” Techno stood in silence before looking around the room. Without the hidden wall open, it looked like a regular basement- with a tv, couch, and workout room, “So, where’d he hide my crossbow this time?”

Bad thought for a second before responding, “I... *think* it’s in the barn? He left with it on his back, saying he was gonna polish it or something, and then came back without it.”

“Knew he was lying...” He walked over, leaning down and kissing Bad’s head. Schlatt looked away, his heart twisting and chest burning as he kept his lips sealed, “Did he touch you?”

“No.” Bad answered. Techno’s possessive paranoia was a constant in this hell, but Bad was thankful that he took his word. The eldest was always wary of leaving the noirette alone with his younger brother, as Wilbur had a track-record of not keeping his hands to himself- so in the end he was justified in his questioning.

“Did he hurt you in any way?”

“He threatened me, but that was it.”

Techno hummed before standing straight, sending Schlatt a warning glance as Schlatt snapped at, “Relax wreck-it-Ralph, i’m not gonna touch your precious barbie doll.” Bad glanced at the older man and Schlatt grimace, “No offense, Bad.”

“None taken, it’s fine...”

Techno growled under his breath, hands balling into fists before turning away, “I’ll be back in a bit, I’m gonna find my crossbow.”

“Alright. I’ll be up in a bit- Oh, and if you see Phil can you tell him I hid Tommy’s cake in the pantry? I uh...didn’t want Wil to get a hold of it. I’ll ice it when I get upstairs.”

“Got it.”

Without another word, Techno walked back upstairs, leaving Bad to finish fixing Schlatt’s leg. Once the basement door shut, the brunette spoke up again.

“...I bet you feel like ya won the lottery. Tech’s seriously the only tolerable one- besides his weird obsession with you...”

“If you think that means I like it here Schlatt, you’re very wrong.”

“Course not. I’m just saying...”

Bad cut and tied the end of the stitch before grabbing the bandages, “Lift.” Schlatt lifted his leg with a groan and Bad quickly wrapped the leg with bandages. When he finished, Bad moved the leg off his lap slowly and stood, grabbing the bloody bolt and putting it in the sink of Tommy’s chemistry area. He washed his hands quickly before wiping them on his clothes. He walked over to Schlatt and gathered the stuff before glancing at him.

“Are you jealous?” Bad asked slyly, “Of you? Hell no.”

“Language.”

Schlatt snorted and Bad continued, “So you’re jealous of Techno.” He packed the medical supplies away, stating it like fact. Schlatt didn’t answer and Bad snickered, the spirits in the room lifting a bit. He walked over, pecking Schlatt’s cheek and Schlatt rolled his eyes, “I’d be blushing if I wasn’t suffering blood loss.” he joked, and Bad laughed softly, “Get some rest, i’m going up to ice Tommy’s cake.”

“Yea yea...”

Without protest, Schlatt adjusted to lay down and Bad went up quickly, opening the basement door before shutting it with a soft click.

Birthday Surprises

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There was a knock on the door as they were preparing, and after peeking through the window Phil knew it was safe to let Bad answer, “Bad, get the door please!” He called with a grin.

The noirette quickly opened the front door and gave a pleasant- yet shaky and nervous- smile at the 2 standing there.

“Dream, Sapnap! How nice to see you two...”

The blonde pushed up his mask and ruffled Bad’s hair as he walked past, “Same here, Bad.” He hummed, walking in and Wilbur spotted them from the couch, “Oh *great*, it’s the piss baby and the fuck boy!” He groaned. Sapnap pulled Bad into a quick hug before rolling his eyes, sneering at the brunette as he shot back, “Oh *great*, it’s the alcoholic! How’s the liver?”

“Fine, thank you.”

“I’m sure.”

“Aw what the fuck?!” Tommy cried as he spotted the pair, frowning deeply, “Wha- Why the fuck are you two here?!”

Dream grinned maliciously, “Uncle Phil invited us. How’s my favorite little bitch boy of a cousin?” He cooed, walking over and reaching to ruffle Tommy’s hair only to get his hand swatted away as Tommy made an indignant noise, “Fuck you!! Dad!!” He turned to the head of house, eyes boring into him. Phil tensed, looking away with a shaky chuckle, “Dream’s your cousin and as this is your eighteenth birthday, it’s important he’s here. Same with Sapnap- he’s practically family too.”

“They’re assholes!”

“Tommy.” Phil warned, still not looking at the boy as he stared daggers into him. After a moment, Tommy growled under his breath, going back to playing with his game. With that, the elder let out a soft sigh and looked back to watching them, giving an apologetic look to Dream and Sapnap.

It was after dinner, and now it was just them playing party games and chatting while Bad put on the cake’s finishing touches. Tommy and Techno were playing mario kart in the living room, Wilbur was laying on the couch watching with boredom, Phil was leaning against the couch’s side, and with their arrival Dream and Sapnap took their own seats on the floor.

Tommy’s phone lit up, ringing with a familiar tune, and he stood up quickly. Picking it up, he

excused himself and ran out to the porch as Dream took his place. If Bad had been looking at it as anybody else, this would have been seen as any other family gathering for a birthday. Bad's hands shook slightly, trying his best to keep a smile as he went back to the kitchen, picked up the icing tube, and began finishing up the icing. He remembered Phil's exact instructions- 3 layer cake with the center layer being vanilla and the top and bottom being chocolate. White frosting, red decorations, and a skull on top...

His personal recipe with Phil's instructions.

Looking at the cake, he could only pray it tasted as good as it looked.

He heard Tommy come back inside, tensing at the slam of the front door followed by a brief argument between him and Dream. He heard Phil put a quick end to it, followed by swift footsteps to the kitchen. Tommy stormed into the kitchen and grabbed a list off the counter, scratching something off with glassy eyes and a reddened face before storming off again with the list in hand. He watches as Techno follows behind closely afterward, and while his instincts say to follow the teen, he simply stays frozen in place, icing the cake.

=x=

Techno tentatively followed his little brother in silence, watching him turn into the morning room. He peeked in, seeing the teen curled in a ball on the couch, grumbling to himself and sniffing. Taking a deep breath, he takes a step in and leans on the doorway.

"Toms? You good?"

The teen sat up in surprise, looking at him before quickly rubbing tears from his eyes and sniffing, "'m fine...Big man 'n shit..."

"Tommy..."

Tommy huffs before holding out a notepad. The older grabs it, looking it over to see a list of names. Freshly crossed out is Eret, Cap, and the twins, and Techno can't help feel disappointed as well. Those were the only family members that were somewhat manageable. Eret and the twins were Tommy's cousins, and Cap was Phil's brother- all of them in the same habits, as they *were* family.

"Ah...you were looking forward to them coming, weren't you?"

"Just...just a little." Techno thinks he hears Tommy mutter under his breath about mostly being excited for Corpse and Val, but he doesn't acknowledge it, focusing on what he thinks is the main problem, "And I'm guessing you didn't want Dream or Sapnap."

"Fuck no! They're assholes!"

Techno snorted, but he couldn't help but agree. Dream and Sapnap always had it out for Tommy, and when they visited as kids the youngest was always the subject of their "jokes". Especially after Wilbur and Techno had both taught them what happened when they'd fuck with them. Techno and Wilbur were far more physical than Tommy, with both of them being more bite than bark, but Tommy had always been more bark than bite.

That was, unless, he had his chemistry set on him. *Then* he was more bite than bark.

Techno didn't know what to say though. Comfort wasn't his strong suit, and he wasn't used to having to talk to the other, so he attempted to be comedic, "Well, at least you have cake, right?"

Tommy didn't laugh.

There was an awkward silence between them, until finally Tommy spoke up. His voice was soft, and he didn't look at Techno at all.

"Tech, why doesn't Dad ever look me in the eyes?"

There's a single moment where Techno's heart stops, a lump forming in his throat as he mills over exactly what the hell he was supposed to say.

What *could* he say? He knew the answer but- dammit...he'd always figured that was something Tommy was oblivious to or just ignored.

"I..."

He hesitates, biting his lip as he tries to think of a bullshit answer. Then Tommy speaks again, "It's why you wear contacts, isn't it? And why you dyed your hair pink." Techno's leg bounces nervously, mouth suddenly dry, "Tommy that- it doesn't-"

"Techno, Tommy?"

The atmosphere is broken as the two look over to the door, seeing Bad standing there nervously, "The ah...cake's ready. Everybody is gathering." Techno almost sighs in relief, and just like that the previous question is brushed off, "Right, c'mon Toms."

The youngest doesn't say anything, simply standing up and brushing past the noirette as Bad watched him walk off with pure concern in his eyes, "Is...he okay?"

"He's fine," Techno wrapped an arm around Bad's waist, leaning down and kissing his forehead, "Just a bit pissed."

He looks unconvinced, but just nods obediently, talking softly, "Right...okay..."

=x=

There's a tension in the room as they sing happy birthday before cutting the cake. They all give Tommy a gift of sorts.

Dream and Sapnap are surprisingly considerate of Tommy's likes; he gets more camera film, colored ink cartridges for his printer, and a steam gift card worth 50 dollar's. Wilbur's gift is something that gets Tommy a bit more excited. Red phosphorus, straight from the black market- shit was expensive, but despite his lack of a job, Wil was high on cash. Tommy immediately knew what he could make using it.

Techno gets Tommy more blank cassette tapes for Tommy to record on- something he did desperately need. Phil gets him more lab equipment and fresh, new safety gear to wear during his experiments. He also gets gifts that were sent by those who couldn't come to the party.

From Eret is 20 dollars, a birthday card, a hunting knife, and a racoon pelt.

From Cap and X33n is a birthday card, and in the box is a new camera.

From the twins, Corpse and Val, is a beautifully crafted machete and a small rabbit doll with a skull mask.

And yet, despite how amazing these things are, Tommy can't wait for his final gift. He *would* have gotten it by now but unfortunately Phil had locked his room to make sure Tubbo stayed put, so only Phil had the key and...

"Tommy, I need to take care of one of the pets first, okay?"

"But-"

"No buts," Phil scolded, cutting another slice of cake and putting it delicately on a paper plate, "You behave for just a few more minutes while I do this, and then you get your final present. Got it?"

Tommy pouts, huffing and pouting as he crosses his arms, grumbling a stubborn "fine...". Phil hummed, grabbing the plate and a bottle of water before walking out the kitchen. For a moment, he loudly starts up the stairs before silently creeping back down and to the backdoor. He opens it quietly and shuts it gently, heading to the barn, tucking the water bottle under his arm as he unhooks his keyring from his belt loop.

Opening the barn door makes it creak eerily, and there's an immediate smell of musk and rot that

hits him. It's not a smell he isn't used to though, and leisurely he starts carefully climbing up the ladder to the loft until he stands on the ledge in front of the padlocked door to the hayloft. That door hadn't used to be there, but Phil needed somewhere to let Wilbur... *express* himself before they had made up the playroom. After it was made, the hayloft was vacant and later Phil needed somewhere to put his newest noisy pet where he wouldn't be heard, and this just happened to be the most convenient.

He inserted the key into the padlock, turning it with a click, letting it drop to the ground, and pushed the door open. Laying on the ground with his back to Phil, illuminated only by the bits of moonlight shining through planks of wood hammered over a smashed window, was Skeppy.

As far as Wilbur, Tommy, or Techno knew, Skeppy was in the attic. It was where they had previously kept him, until after one too many close calls with Bad offhandedly mentioning the noise in the attic, Phil decided to move him without the boys knowing.

The loft area still had the lingering metallic smell of blood as well as remains of the blood from Wil's previous victims staining the boards, with a pile of straw with a blanket on it to act as a bed in the corner.

"Bluejay, I've got you a treat~" He teased, only to frown as the man's back remained on him, letting out a disgruntled noise of acknowledgement. Phil rolled his eyes, "It's cake. A pretty big slice, too. And because i'm feeling generous tonight and because you've been good, I got you a bottle of clean water." Phil stated plainly, tone more sarcastic this time with slight irritation. The noirette spoke, his voice hoarse from screaming, "It's probably poisoned with something vomit inducing, knowing you..."

The blond rolled his eyes, setting the paper plate and water bottle on the floor before stepping back, "Nope. Just regular layered birthday cake, vanilla and chocolate. White and red frosting." He thought before adding, "What if I told you Bad made it, hm?"

Phil almost smirked as he saw Skeppy visibly tense. He watched as he hesitantly sat up and turned, cautiously glancing between Phil and the cake before reaching out and snatching the water bottle as well as pulling the plate towards him.

There was a slight silence as Skeppy hastily opened the water, quickly chugging the water so fast that he starts coughing as he chokes. Phil only watches in amusement as he coughs into a dirty hoodie sleeve, taking deep breaths as he peeks at the cake.

"W-what...no fork?" He snarks, and Phil looks at him with zero amusement, "Last time I gave you a fork, you jumped on my back and nearly stabbed me with it. I'm not taking a chance. Use your hands and just be grateful, Bluejay."

He flinches at the bite in Phil's voice before huffing, resigning himself to using his hands as he breaks off a piece. Popping it in his mouth, the sweetness of the cake quickly flows over his taste buds, and there's a pit in his stomach as nostalgia hits him, swallowing quickly before taking another larger bite.

His eyesight gets blurry, tears slipping down his face as starts to shake.

Bad's cooking was something he missed almost as much as his mom's cooking. Tasting this was like torture that he couldn't stop putting through himself. He mourned the days where he didn't appreciate the sight of Bad in his hoodie by the stove in the morning, ready with avocado salad in the fridge and pain pills on the counter to help with his hangover. He missed hearing him hum a tune he'd make up, he missed waking up to the smell of bacon, eggs, and chocolate pancakes wafting into the room and walking downstairs to the brightest smile he could imagine.

Before he and Bad moved in together, Skeppy was never a morning person. He'd whine and moan when Bad would come into his room and open the curtains to shine daylight on his face. He never appreciated it all before.

Now, he would give anything to experience it all and actually be thankful for it this time.

As he watched the young man break into pieces on the floor, immense satisfaction filled Phil, smiling with fake sympathy, "Aww...You miss him, don't you, Bluejay? Hurts, doesn't it?" He felt a dark chuckle bubbling up inside him, voice becoming more sinister, "Oh who gives a shit. You really think you have the right to be crying? After it's your fault he's here in the first place?" He hisses. Skeppy doesn't respond, still quietly sobbing and trembling in front of him.

With a roll of his eyes, Phil scoffs, "A pathetic brat, a terrible friend, and a disobedient pet. That's all you are."

He knows his words are reaching Skeppy even with no acknowledgement, and with a chuckle, Phil turns heel to the door, "However...I suppose if you prove you can be obedient...I'll let you see him." He grabs the padlock again, walking out and adding tauntingly with a laugh, "Well, that is, if he even *wants* to see you. He's doing perfectly well without you, after all~"

With that, he slams the door shut and clips on the padlock, securing it. With a satisfied smile, Phil headed down the ladder and back to the house, Skeppy's cries fresh in mind.

=x=

Tommy ran upstairs ahead of Phil, whining for him to hurry as he went. Phil rolled his eyes, following his son upstairs and to his bedroom room door, eyeing the boy beside him as he underlocks the door.

Pushing it open, Phil hummed, "Happy birthday Toms. Have fun~" He walked off and Tommy

quickly sped in, slamming and locking the door behind him. He looked at his bed and immediately his stomach twisted, internally groaning in irritation as he realized Wilbur wasn't the only one who seemed to misunderstand his intentions with Tubbo.

He walked over, quickly untying the ropes tying the smaller's wrists to his bed and discarding it with an eye roll. Seriously, how hard was it to get across that all he wanted was a friend? You could still admire someone's looks without being attracted to them, and while he thought that would've been clear apparently it wasn't to two of his family members.

Tommy heard a groan and his eyes lit up, looking to see the brunette's eyes fluttering open.

As Tubbo came to, he winced at the light and slowly sat up. He groaned, rubbing his eyes.

Had it all been a nightmare? Was he fine?

Recalling the events, his blood drained as he suddenly recognized that the room wasn't his.

"You're awake!" He turned his head and screamed shrilly, recognizing Tommy instantly as he scrambled away, "N-no!! Get the fuck away from me, stay the fuck away!!!" He desperately tried to get away, tears quickly welling in his eyes as he really began to process his situation. Tommy's eyes filled with confusion, suddenly looking lost by the other's reaction before his eyes widened, "Stop-!" He reacted with lightning quick reflexes, grabbing Tubbo's wrist and pulling him towards him just before he fell off the bed, "You'll hurt yourself for fuck's sake!" He scolded.

Tubbo squirmed anyway, hitting and trying to shove the other boy away wordlessly in pure panic.

Reluctantly, Tommy grabbed his other wrist, "W-why are you acting like this?! We're friends, right? Why are you fuckin' screamin' n' shit?!" He cried, voice showing genuine confusion. At that, Tubbo suddenly froze, looking at the other boy, "Wha...what?"

Tommy gave a relieved sigh, a shaky smile stretching across his lips, "Friends. We're friends, that's why you're here." His eyes lit up as Tubbo only looked more fearful, "T...the fu-"

"Well..." Tommy continued, pulling Tubbo closer and throwing his arms around the horrified boy as he did so, "We were friends before, but now we're best friends! Fuckin' cool, right?!" He spoke with innocent excitement, hugging Tubbo tightly.

Meanwhile, Tubbo felt nothing but fear and anxiety, and only one thought crossed his mind.

'I'm so fucked.'

=x=

"Fuck you guys and fuck your shitty department!! Malditos cerdos inútiles, no pueden hacer otra cosa que engordar y sentarse en sus traseros todo el día!!" Quackity slammed the door to the police station behind him as he cursed out the officers. He stormed towards his car and opened it, climbing in the driver's seat and slamming it shut.

He released a scream of frustration as he ripped off his beanie, threading his fingers in his hair and pulling at it. 2 months. Skeppy had been missing for two fucking months since he had a breakthrough, and since then Quackity had scrapped up money to buy that house of his, move in, go through each and every one of his documents, and try and decipher where the fuck his friend had disappeared to.

So far, all Quackity knew was small country towns were hell to live in, he hadn't figured out a single thing, the police were the least helpful mother fuckers in the world, and he was goddamn stressed to hell. The only lead he had was a photo Skeppy tacked up on the wall of Bad's old room of some random farm dude, and the fact that a boy from a school in town had recently disappeared. He had put up posters everywhere notifying people to contact him if they knew anything about Schlatt, Bad, Skeppy, or even the boy's disappearance. It was the only thing he could do at that point, and he felt helpless because of it.

He was worried sick for his friends- sure he was always a bit nosy and loved to annoy the shit out of them, but they were still his friends. Skeppy had a habit of getting ahead of himself, and at this point Quackity was terrified he was actually dead.

The shrill ringing of his phone got Quackity's attention and he grabbed it, begrudgingly checking the name. He eye'd the unknown number suspiciously, before taking a deep breath and answering, "Quackity speaking. Who is this?"

"I saw your poster. I have some info about the boy, Tubbo. I also have some friends who have info on the others too."

Quackity felt like the air was punched out of him. The fucking timing, what the hell...

"Wait- Really?"

"Yes. The police aren't taking it seriously, so I'm taking my chances with you. But..." Quackity deflated. Of course there was a "but", there was always a fucking "but".
"But...?"

"But we can't talk about it over the phone. I want us to meet up."

Quackity tensed, suddenly anxious. This was insanely suspicious- who the hell even was this guy? Could he trust him?

"Could I at least get your name first?"

"You can get my last name for now. Alvaro. Tomorrow at two pm, meet me in Manifold park. Got it?"

“How can I trust you?”

Quackity spoke quickly, and he swore he heard the other man snort, “You’ll just have to if you want information.” With that, he hung up, leaving Quackity speechless. He put down his phone, laid back, and stared silently at the roof of his car, thinking.

With a deep sigh, he let out a humorless laugh, coming to his decision.

"Well, I have nothing left to lose anyway."

Chapter End Notes

Admit it, how many of y'all started playing hayloft by mother mother in your heads during the Phil and Skeppy bit?

Bittersweet

Chapter Notes

I got a sudden blast of motivation for this story and was able to write this all in one go! The supportive comments are so nice, thank you all so much and im happy you're all enjoying!

I have a category in my server dedicated to this fic, so come on in! I'd love to meet y'all and hear feedback, plus you get notifications about new chapters the moment it's updated!

<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Bad's eyes fluttered open as he woke up, the bright red numbers on the alarm clock telling him it was time to get up. Part of him wanted to stay in bed- it was warm, comfy, and sleep usually let him forget about his situation.

But another part of him wanted to get up and out of the room. 6 am meant that everybody else was asleep and he could enact his morning ritual in peace.

He rolled out of bed with a yawn, carefully creeping through the bedroom to grab his hoodie and shorts, slipping out of the oversized shirt Techno leant him for sleeping and into his day clothes. His eyes adjusted to the dark of the room quickly as he grabbed his red hair tie and pulled his hair back in a small, messy ponytail. Finally, he grabbed a tiny notebook and pencil from the dresser top before quietly making his way out of the room, until he heard a soft ding that made him flinch. He cast a quick glance at Techno to make sure the older man was still fast asleep, letting out a sigh of relief to see his back still turned and breathing rhythmically, before his eyes met the glowing screen on the nightstand.

Techno had left his phone on and out in the open last night. His heart leapt in his throat at the realization, eyes wide as they fixated on the phone. He...he could call for help. Freedom was inches away from him, and he could take it.

He could...

He trembled, eyes fixated in horror at the scene before him. Phil was angrier than he'd ever seen him before, and by the look on Techno's face even he was on edge.

"I thought you were smarter than this Scott, I really, really fucking did!!" He snarled, and Bad held back a scream at the sickening noise of bone's breaking and the blood curdling shriek that came after. Phil glared sharply at him and Schlatt, and as Bad met his eyes there was a sickening

*sense of fear that shot through him that he'd never forget, "Let this be a fucking lesson to you two not the pull the same bullshit little Sparrow here has! Because this marks the end of me playing Mr-fucking-nice!!! If I catch either of you doing the same shit as him- sneak a phone, lie, run, **anything** - and I have to be the one to deal with you, I will not be as merciful as my boys!" He grabbed the other by his hair, shotgun in hand pointing at the pets, "We don't have time. Wilbur, get Schlatt and Bad in the backroom and then lock down the playroom. Techno, make sure everything is hidden. Tommy, make sure any blood on the carpet is covered up. Don't try to fucking clean it, if you have to then fuckin dump a glass of red wine to cover it up and make it look like an accidental spill. Now." Bad watched in horror as Phil dragged the half conscious, pleading man out of the family room and out the porch, not registering the others moving and scrambling. He felt numb with fear, unable to process what was happening even after he was left alone in the room by the others, Wilbur dragged off an in-shock Schlatt. All his eyes remained on was the item Phil had left behind. A small phone with a shattered screen, smeared with blood.*

Then, Wilbur grabbed him by his arm and pulled him to his feet, dragging him to the basement door, and the loud bang of a shotgun firing ringing in his ears just before he's sent stumbling into Schlatt's arms while the door slams and locks behind them.

No.

He quickly walks out the room as his eyes sting with tears, shutting the door with a soft click and shaking this head. He knew the consequences if he was found out, and if he was found out then he knew Phil would just make him *wish* he was dead.

As Bad went through the hallway he opened the window curtains, letting the light of sunrise shine through the windows before heading down the stairs, careful to be quiet as he headed to the kitchen. Opening his notebook, he looked over the list for the day. He'd been there long enough to know everybody's patterns on weekdays and weekends. Between him and Schlatt, he was the only one allowed free roam from 5 am to 10 pm, and chores usually occupied his day and kept his mind from thinking too much. Cooking, cleaning, laundry, trash...

Entering the kitchen, he set the notebook on the counter and started getting breakfast ready while he mentally went over the day.

It was Saturday. He'd make breakfast, Techno and Phil would be up at 8, then Tommy at 8:30. They'd be down and will grab breakfast at 9, then at 9:30 they would go take care of the cows. He'd go up and make the bedrooms, then go back down at 10:30 to most-likely see Wilbur eating on the couch, clean up the kitchen, at 12 Phil has a doctors appointment.

He'd make lunch for the others, 1 is when Techno is going to the store, Tommy would probably be spending time talking to the newest victim all day, Wilbur is probably gonna be home all day so it would be best to avoid the living room, dinner was to be made at 5...

If the universe was on his side, then hopefully today would go smoothly.

As always, he could only hope.

=x=

Talking was...unsuccessful to say the least.

Since he'd woken up, Tubbo hadn't made a peep- all but refusing to talk- and Tommy didn't understand why. He thought friends were supposed to talk about all sorts of things and be happy around each other- not... *this*. All Tubbo had done was curl up against the headboard and just glare at him.

"Are you really not gonna say *anything*?" He questioned with a pout, and the only response he got was a small shift. Tommy thought for a second, eyeing the other boy until he suddenly got an idea, "Oh! Wait- you must be all pissy because your hungry huh? That's fine- I'll go get you some food!" He stood up quickly and ran out before Tubbo could respond.

As Tommy ran downstairs, he found Bad washing the last of the knives. He knew at this point Phil had already left and so had Techno, so he quickly grabbed the plate meant for him as well as the extra one and headed back upstairs. He opened the door to his room, shutting it with his foot afterward, "Kay, got food!" He crawled on his bed and slid the extra plate of food to him, "Bad made BLT, his cooking is really good so you'll like it." He grabbed half of his own sandwich and bit into it, humming before looking at Tubbo expectantly.

The brunette eyed the sandwich cautiously before reaching and grabbing his half, uncurling to bite into it. Tommy watched in triumph as his eyes lit up a bit and he continued eating, a grin spreading across his face, "See? It's good!" Tubbo nodded shakily, and the two ate in silence for a bit longer. When they finished, Tommy took the paper plates and tossed them in the trash before looking at the other boy hopefully, "So, are we actually gonna talk without you freaking out like a little bitch now?"

On the surface, the question seemed harsh and insulting, but as Tubbo processed Tommy's tone he quickly realized that it wasn't meant like that at all. The blond's voice was teasing and it was clearly meant to be a joke.

So, instead of being offended, Tubbo brushed it off and hesitated before asking, "T-Tommy be...be honest with me here, okay?" Tommy nodded, tilting his head in slight confusion, prompting Tubbo to continue, "Why...am I actually here? Wh...Why did you and your family *kidnap* me?"

Tommy's smile widened, "Because like I said, yesterday I turned eighteen!" Tubbo only seemed more lost, and Tommy snickered, deciding to elaborate, "It's a family tradition type of thing. When a family member turns eighteen, they get the chance to pick their first victim- someone they want to keep either for a long time or even hopefully for the rest of their life. And because you're my friend, I chose you as my first victim so then we can be best friends!" He seemed giddy, and Tubbo paled a bit as he continued, "Though, you don't have to grab them immediately. Techno didn't get Bad until he was twenty and Wilbur waited a few months after his eighteenth birthday before grabbing Schlatt. But I didn't really wanna wait, because I already made up my mind years ago."

Tubbo felt panic rising again, words leaving him without a filter, "Tommy- we aren't *friends* ! I didn't even know you till yesterday! We haven't even talked before, so what the hell are you on about?!" Tommy's smile wavered, eyebrows pinching together, "W-well.....I mean...Wilbur said that even though you don't know a lot about me, we're still friends if I know lots about you-"

Tubbo let out a guffaw of disbelief, "Surely not- You- you and this Wilbur guy are fucking delusional-! You don't know a thing about me!!"

Tommy's eyes narrowed and he crossed his arms, gaze boring into Tubbo's as he spoke, "Your full name is Tubbo Koray Mulburn. You know how to play the piano and like to play a lot of meme songs. Your main group of friends in school consists of Quig Quinton- who lives right next door to you-, Jack Manifold- whose family is well known for the park being named after his great grandfather-, and Nolan Purpled- who goes by his last name because his cheater of a mom gave him his first name and it makes him uncomfortable. You sometimes go by they/them and have fun wearing skirts sometimes, but you haven't gotten the confidence to tell your parents."

With every word, Tubbo felt himself grow colder, and Tommy let out a loud laugh at his shock. He gave a cocky smile, as if there wasn't a single thing wrong with what he had just said, "So, believe me now?"

The brunette was speechless, unable to process the blonds words. Eventually, he managed to fumble it, "You...you're fucking crazy...yes I believe you but- but what the fuck is wrong with you?!" He cried, and Tommy's smile quickly dropped, "What? What did I say?"

"What the fuck do you mean "What did I say?", you fucking know what you said!!"

"You're the one who said I didn't know a thing, I was just proving you wrong!"

"Again, what the fuck is wrong with you!"

Tommy huffed, getting up, "You know what, if you're gonna keep being a dickhead I'm just gonna play on my laptop! Fuck this!" He went to his desk, sitting down angrily and opening his laptop. Silence took over the room as the blond focused on his computer, and Tubbo took deep breaths. He huddled up against the headboard and hugged his knees, deciding not to poke the bear more than he already had.

He didn't know what Tommy was capable of, and he silently scolded himself for letting his emotions get ahead of him. For all he knew, he was lucky right now.

And hopefully, he would remain that way.

=x=

“Songbird!!”

The noirette jumped at the shrill voice, flipping off the vacuum as he recognized it as Wilbur's voice, “Bad!!” The man calls again, and quickly Bad heads to the source of his voice, reaching the basement door.

“Bad, I said get down here!”

The noirette sped up, reaching the bottom just as Wilbur turned the corner. The brunette seemed to be in a sour mood, only scowling as he wrestled his jacket on, “I forgot I have to meet some friends at the pub, you need to patch up Schlatt.” He barked as he ran up the stairs, slamming the basement door as he left without another word. For a moment, Bad was about to scold him for actually having messed with Schlatt when his current wounds were not even slightly being healed, but instead he decided against it, standing there for a second in shock at the man's rush, before a weak, hoarse voice met his ears.

“What's poppin', pretty thing?”

Bad looked over to the torture room, immediately remembering the task at hand. Schlatt was slumped in the chair as usual and Bad felt alarm, running over and struggling with the leather straps at his wrists and ankles, “Not even the decency to not only let you heal, but also *unbind* you first...!” He hisses in frustration as Schlatt watches him drowsily, pale as ever from the bloodloss. He doesn't say a word, vision slightly blurry as he just lets Bad help him stand and limp to the old couch across the room. Just like yesterday, Bad moves through the large basement gracefully, having grown used to the pattern of constantly sewing and patching Schlatt up. He knows where Tommy keeps the medkit for his station on instinct- grabbing and opening it up to take out the bandages, sanitized needle, and medical thread. He quickly snagged up the rubbing alcohol and cotton balls when he heard Schlatt's hoarse voice speak up again, “Whiskey...please...”

Bad stood again, running upstairs to the kitchen. Usually, they had whiskey for a numbing pain

agent- however they'd used the last of it and Phil hadn't picked more up at the store. He rummaged through the fridge before eventually just grabbing one of the cold beers and rushing back downstairs. He cracked the bottle cap open as he rushed down, handing it to the cut-up brunette before resuming preparations.

Schlatt was quick to start downing the alcohol, letting out a shaky, relieved sigh as Bad got everything in over, "Alright, where are the major wounds first."

"W....W on my calf, thigh need's redressing as well. Rest are fuckin' minor shit..."

"Language," Bad reprimanded softly, and the brunette wheezed- coughing a bit as he chuckled, "Right, sorry beautiful." The two fell into silence as Bad began to patch and stitch the wounds, humming softly. For once, calm fell between them- without the noise of the rest of the family, there was a sense of rare peace they enjoyed.

After stitching and dressing his calf, Bad re-dressed the wound from the crossbow bolt. Then, Bad began to focus on the minor ones- moving closer to disinfect the cut to Schlatt's forehead. He got on his knees over the brunette's lap, silently cursing Schlatt for being so damn tall. The noirette could feel Schlatt's eyes on him, slowly coming out of his hazy state and waking up a bit. He tried not to pay mind to any warmth that built inside him, or the distraction that was the small, lazy smile tugging at the older man's lips. Bad remained focused on the task at hand, lips pressed in a thin line and brows pinched together.

"...Bad?"

The noirette blinked and looked slightly down at the other man with questioning eyes, "Do you taste as sweet as you act?" He tried to keep his voice even, tone playful and genuine. Bad snorted, the cliché of the line not missing him as he started to chuckle, "Is that the best you got?"

"No, but it made you laugh didn't it?"

"It did..." Bad finished and settled down, not missing how a large, shaky hand gently rested on his waist, "You know me...I love hearing you happy- even for a moment..." The words struck a chord within Bad, speechless as his face warmed. He swallowed dryly, unsure of what to say in return. Cautiously, his opposite hand slipped down and he rested an open palm over Schlatt's heart- unspoken agreement passing between them as Schlatt did the same thing. Feeling the core organ pulse under his palm was surreal, but intensely comforting. It grounded him, reminding him that Schlatt and him were both still living, breathing human beings. Reminded him that he wasn't alone in this hell- that there was someone who understood. He felt his own heartbeat start to sync, eyes

fluttering shut as he leaned forward and pressed their foreheads together.

At that moment, it felt like they were the only two people in the world- Hearts beating and breathing each other's air in sync. Bad felt happy.

He tilted his head and their lips met in a chaste kiss, melting together in silence. There was no ulterior motive in the action- no sexual charge or force applied. The only intention was comfort and understanding, and the only motive was a developed love between them. Schlatt tasted slightly of iron and alcohol, but Bad had grown used to it. This was the only time they had together, with everybody gone or occupied, a little unspoken bond the two of them shared that just...happened.

Okay, maybe Schlatt had lied when he snarked to Techno about not touching Bad. But then again, he had only meant that for that moment- this didn't count. This, he couldn't help and neither could Bad.

Because it felt *nice* . To feel genuine love and affection, even for just a moment. For a second, Schlatt thought about leaving a little mark- just something for Bad to touch and remember him- but he knew better. He knew that would jeopardize Bad's safety- especially if Techno found out.

The two of them didn't know when this closeness started. How it was, why it worked how it did, even where the feelings came from. But it happened, and they had learned to just accept it. Because it was something pure and untainted.

They kept each other's hopes up. They spoke about what they'd do when it was all over. They talked about escape, they talked about the people they missed and had back home- Hell, they even joked about going on a proper date.

If they survived that long.

If they escaped.

If they were rescued.

If .

As the two sat in the dark of the basement, exchanging whispers and small kisses only meant for them, all that they can think is they wouldn't trade these brief moments for the world. Because these little moments were the only true happiness they got.

=x=

Quackity stood at the statue in the heart of the park, tapping his foot as he watched his watch. A minute till 2.

Theres a deep pit in his stomach as he suddenly wishes he asked someone to come with, but then again he has literally no friends in this fucking town. Only friends he did have are currently missing or potentially dead.

Fan-fucking-tastic.

Quackity growled under his breath as his watch hit 2. He looked around, unable to see a single person, and groaned lowly. Had this been a set up? A prank? Where the hell-

“You Quackity?”

The noirette jumped, whipping around to see a man who was more than a head taller than him not that far away. He had dark brown hair and wore a green long-sleeve shirt with deep blue jeans. He stood at the entrance to one of the paths, a blank expression on his face as he looked at Quackity with unamusement.

“Ah...yes?” Quackity laughed nervously, “And you are...?”

The man seemed to relax, giving a small smile and walking over, offering his hand. Quackity took it, and the man gave his hand a firm shake, “Sam Alvaro. I know my call was rather...ominous, but I wanted to make sure you really were looking for answers. C’mon, the others are all waiting in a more private area of the park. We can walk and talk.”

“Okay...?”

Quackity followed Sam down the path hesitantly, noticing it led into the forest surrounding the path, “So Sam...you live around here?”

“Yep. I actually work as a security officer at the local school, so it goes without saying that the police’s lack of action concerning the most recent disappearance is rather upsetting for me.”

“Uh...huh...” Quackity nodded awkwardly as Sam continued, “You?”

“Huh?”

“Are you from around here?”

“Oh- uh...no, actually. I was in law school before this, but I moved into a friend of mine's house after ah...after he disappeared. I wanted to figure out what happened to him.” Sam nodded with a hum, “Understandable...”

They both went quiet as they approached voices, and it wasn't long till they came to a clearing with logs set up like seats. There were 2 people, and as they approached them they went eerily quiet, staring.

Sam turned to him, gesturing to the others, “This is Minx and Traves. Minx knew Schlatt, Traves knew Schlatt and Bad, and I knew Tubbo. You aren't the only one who wants answers, we do too and we're hoping to give you any info you need to get them.”

Quackity gawked in astonishment, hope bubbling in his chest. He was actually getting *help* . These people knew things and they were trusting *him* to help...

He wasn't going to let them down.

Quackity took a deep breath and pulled his backpack off his back, unable to contain his happiness as he fumbled for his phone to record the conversation. He sat on the log and Sam followed suit, unlocking his phone and immediately starting to voice recorder. First, he had to ask, “Okay, first things first; for the record, do you guys consent to being recorded vocally?” All three of them affirmed and Quackity suppressed a holler of joy.

“Good. Minx, you first. State your name for the record, please?”

Chapter End Notes

Nobody:

Schlatt: "Relax wreck it Ralph, im not gonna touch your Barbie doll!"

Also Schlatt: So anyway, that was a lie.

"Happy" pills & Rules

Chapter Notes

TW for a LOT of talk about mental illness, misdiagnose, mistreatment, a bit of blood, and all that bad stuff.

Disclaimer: I am not trying to portray certain mental illnesses in a bad light nor am I trying to say people with these illnesses are inherently evil. What Wilbur has in this fic is in no way to blame for his actions, because a fact is that these people are more a danger to themselves than others. They are rarely dangerous. It's the factors around him that have made him how he is, and he was like that before it even started affecting him.

I've done my best to respectfully portray the following these things, especially through a lot of research, so I hope I did well.

I have a category in my server dedicated to this fic, so come on in! I'd love to meet y'all and hear feedback, plus you get notifications about new chapters the moment it's updated!

<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"...I met Schlatt while out drinkin'. He worked there as a bartender, and lemme tell ya', the man is stubborn like a goat. Loves to read people when he meets them, and if he doesn't like 'em, he lets 'em know! He ain't subtle. Was he an asshole? Fook yes he was!...But, he was an affectionate asshole. The type that ya can't really stay too mad at, because ya know he dun't meant it." Minx's accent was thick as her voice rang through the cell phone, but Quackity listened closely anyway, blank sheets of notepaper on his desk. He had different recordings of each of them- one for Sam, one for Traves, and one for Minx. He'd asked questions until it had gotten later, and the 4 of them had decided to exchange phone numbers in case.

Now that he was home, he had decided to re-listen to Minx's recording first. Schlatt was the first to go missing, so his disappearance might tell something about the others.

"Could you tell anything about the night he disappeared?" Quackity voice came from the recording.

"Now I wouldn't be here if I didn't now, would I?...The night Schlatt disappeared, he had worked a bit later than usual. Now, usually, Vinnie's brings in a lot of shady types- all really suspicious guys who are just there for a cheap glass of alcohol, the cunts- so of course, I don't usually pay anybody any mind for actin' a bit off. But- there was this *one* guy that really just tipped off all the red flags for me."

"Oh?"

"Mhm. Real college boy-esque, guitar playin', slightly emo lookin' bitch- real tall and lanky too, maybe about six four to six five? Could tell he had brown fluffy hair and was wearing a beanie an' trench coat." She started giggling a bit, "Sorry- sorry it's just, I remembered a real dark joke Swagger made. He was there too- but only stuck around for around thirty minutes. He said the guy looked about ready to shoot up a damn school- trench coat and all! Off track, I know. So, He sat in this booth that nobody really likes, 'cause you gotta crane your neck look at the fookin tv, and the lightbulb above it's always flickerin'! The whole night, from around...I think it was around seven to about nine- just thirty minutes before I left and forty-five minutes before Schlatt did- but the entire time, the man didn't even order a drink! He was just watchin' like a damn creep, and I don't even think Schlatt knew or noticed- and after a while I just chose to ignore it. Eventually, the guy left, and shortly after Schlatt asked me out. Can you believe that? And of 'course I accepted- Schlatt's a good lookin' guy, matched a lot of my likes ideally, so I thought why the hell not. I left after wards, and...that was the last time I ever saw him."

"Yikes...This...this guy, can you give a bit more description?"

"I can try. I studied his movements a lot in the times Schlatt was helping another customer- he didn't seem..." There is a brief pause, "Eh...well, ta put it simply, he didn't seem all too right in the head. There would be moments where his gaze would shoot off into a different direction all of a sudden like he'd seen something that wasn't there, he'd constantly fidget- he just acted very abnormally."

"Wait-" Traves piped up, "Can you tell me exactly what he'd do besides that?"

"Well- this was fookin' two years ago, so I could be remembering wrong but- there was *one* moment where he came up and talked to me and...well, he seemed kind of confused? He spoke very quickly, askin' questions that didn't seem to make sense, but then got frustrated when I couldn't answer. Schlatt had been in the bathroom, and eventually I just told him to fuck off because he was freakin' me out."

"I might be wrong but- that behavior really lines up with how my friend acts Slime when he's off his meds..." Another pause happens as Traves thinks, "He...sort of gets super paranoid about the most random things. He asks us if we see things that aren't there, asks us nonsense questions that get him frustrated when we don't answer- he doesn't think straight at all. However, when he's on his meds he's mostly just fine."

"Do you know what Slime...has?"

"Ah...that's the issue. I...don't really remember. Ted is his caretaker, not me- does a real good job too. Ever since they moved in together, Ted's been reminding him daily and Slime's more than happy to take them, because I think Ted's made him understand that they truly are for Slime's benefit only- there are still times that Slime will suddenly be convinced one of the pills is poison or something and making him take it is...a struggle, but Ted's managed."

"Do you think you can give me Ted's number? I might want to talk to him."

"Sure! Here-" Quackity quickly started scribbling down the number as Traves listed it off.

After a few more questions with Minx, the recorder ends, and Quackity looks down at his list of notes.

Right now, he had one suspect description. A young caucasian male, possibly around six four to six five feet in height, lanky, and brown hair. Another note is he might be just mentally unwell without medication, and seemed to be watching Schlatt for around two hours in a corner that nobody would have noticed him unless looking, and didn't order a single drink while there.

That...that might help narrowing it down...

But there was something that bothered him.

He pulled up Traves's recording, grabbing a new sheet of paper.

"Bad and I met in freshman year of highschool. His dad is the police chief around here but ah...the guy is really rude. Bad never had it easy with his dad though- the guy expected the world of him and if he was any less than perfect...well...he wasn't that nice. Bad was still a really kind and sweet person none-the-less- real fighter too. I didn't know Skeppy that well though- I just know Bad's dad disapproved of their...friendship? Relationship? I didn't know..."

"Did Bad ever mention anything about maybe...anybody following him?"

"Well- yes, actually. I was also there when it happened too but- unlike what Minx said about Schlatt, Bad was well aware and it seemed almost like the guy was just following him *everywhere* ...The first time I saw him, the guy was white, had slightly dirty blonde hair, wore a deep green, short-sleeved button-up shirt, old, dirty loose jeans and had this straw hat. Decently built, looked strong, maybe in his middle thirties, around a more average height- ...He would've looked normal if he hadn't been watching Bad like a falcon watching prey."

"Did he exhibit any irregular behavior?"

"Other than the stalking thing, no."

Quackity paused the recording.

That .

That's what was strange.

This was an entirely different suspect.

He flipped to Sam's recording, grabbing yet another blank paper as he skipped through until it got to the part he wanted to hear.

"...Tubbo is a good kid, y'know? Bit of trouble with having a filter, struggled a bit in english...but he was sweet, good humor, the like....So...when he comes up to me bawling his eyes out and trembling like a leaf, of course i'm worried. He tells me that someone has been stalking him, shows me the evidence, and even gets one of his friends down to back him up on some of them. Gave me a name too, Tommy. Now, I'm thinking to myself that- I didn't know of anybody in the school named Tommy! But...well, it's not like I know *everybody*. So, I look him up in the system and low and behold."

There's the sound of a paper being handed over, and Quackity looks to his side to see the papers Sam gave him.

"Thomas Innit Drystan. Eighteen years old, six foot one, blonde hair and blue eyes-"

Quackity stops the recording.

Three witnesses, three victims, three suspects. But which suspect is the true culprit?

Unless...they all were?

=x=

The next morning, Wilbur doesn't get out of bed. He doesn't do anything.

All he does is just...lay in bed, because there's no point that he can find in getting up. He might have just slept, but he feels still so tired and just...numb.

....

He wants them to go away. But he doesn't find it in him to scream them away. What's the point anyway? They just keep coming back. Over. And over.

"Wilbur, it's time to get up!"

And Over.

"Wilbur Soot Drystan!"

He grips the pillow tightly, a creeping sense of anxiety and fear tingling up his spine as he hears footsteps up the stairs- heavy and loud as his brain goes wild. Suddenly, anxiety spikes through him and he wants someone- *anyone* that he knows he can trust.

The door creaks open and light washes over the room. His eyes snap open and he see's Techno looking at him from the door. His older brother looks tired- and Wilbur can tell from the dirt on his clothes and obvious lack of his jacket that he'd been out farming.

Upon entering, Techno can see the wild look in his brother's eyes, fear and paranoia clear in wide bluish brown orbs.

"Wil?" His voice is a lot gentler when he peers into the room, his shadow cast over Wilbur. The brunette is immediately shooting up, kicking his blankets off desperately, "Techno- Techno thank

god-!" He barreled into his older brother, hugging him tightly- much to the other's sudden confusion. Immediately, he began rambling, "T-the- they're gonna hurt us- they're gonna- and- and the dog, the dog has a *chip* in it Techno-

Techno's brow furrowed together and he sighed with a deep frown, shaking his head, "Fuck...not this again. Wil, did you take your antidepressants?"

"I don't fucking need antidepressants, Techno, I need us to get out of here-!!!"

"Yes, you *do* . Come on you- you'll feel better if you take them." Techno's nose scrunched up as he eyed the bottle of medication on his younger brother's nightstand- as if he didn't even believe his own words. And even if he did, Wilbur sure as hell didn't.

"Techno please you gotta believe me-!!!"

"Take your damn pills, Wil. Dad pays for them for a reason, and they are supposed to help you." Techno pried Wilbur off of him carefully. He knew how delicate Wil could be when he got like this, his tone sterner and his voice gruff- as if he was quickly losing patience and anger was building inside him.

"But- No- Techno c-come on, you believe me right-"

"I'm not gonna say it again Wilbur!" He snapped, "I don't believe I single load of bullshit you are spewing, so get off of me and take the damn pills!!!" Techno felt familiar anger bubbling inside him and bursting out at his brother against his will, jaw clenched and resisting to a voice in the back of his head screaming to clamp his hands around his brother's neck.

Wilbur keeps insisting, but all he hears is *static*. Infuriating nonsense that's grating and irritating in every way and he doesn't know why it pisses him off so much but it *does*. His eyes squeeze shut, and suddenly he can see it; the noise stops as he's bashing Wilbur's skull into the floor over and over and over, blood splattering and dead eyes...He knew he could do it, really. Wilbur might have been taller, but he was stronger and heavier. He just needed to grasp his hair and- and-

Techno growled, picking up Wilbur and carrying him to the bed despite his protests. He dropped him unceremoniously, as he ignored the brunette's pleas. He was silent, knowing anything coming from his mouth would just serve to cause further anger.

He turned his back on him, quickly getting out of the room and slamming the door shut behind him

while ignoring Wilbur's sobs and pleas not to go. He couldn't think straight, storming to his own room and slamming that door shut as well.

All he sees is red as he flies into a rage, feeling no pain as he starts beating his fists on the walls, pacing his room, screaming and raving while breaking whatever sparked even the slightest irritation in him.

When the fire finally simmers down, he's slumped in the corner of his room, his hands throbbing in pain, his head fuzzy and hammering, entire body trembling as all he feels is regret. His room is dark and a mess, the only light being from a slither in his curtains. He knows this isn't normal. He knows this isn't the temperament of anybody fully stable. He knows because not everybody got this pissed off about a clicking noise, or from a lack of silence.

He *hates* this.

He hated feeling a complete slave to his anger. He hated not being able to comfort Wilbur during his perceived "episodes", because he just ended up being riled up so damn fast.

Hearing a soft knock on the door, he barely gives acknowledgement before the doors creaking open and Phil's looking over the room with critical eyes. There's a bit of pity in his eyes, as well as genuine sympathy when he looks at Techno's large form huddled in the corner, knees and hands pulled to his chest.

His bedside lamp lay shattered on the floor, same with a small glass statue, his trash bin kicked, a fist sized hole in the wall...

Phil walked over, getting down on his knees and reaching out slowly, "C'mon mate. Lemme see your hands..." He coaxed softly, tone gentle. Techno gave him a wary look before giving in, showing his hands. They were covered in cuts and blood from the glass, the knuckles scraped to hell. Inspecting them carefully, Phil sighed, "What happened this time..."

"W...Wil had another one of his episodes when I checked on him..." He croaked, and Phil frowned with disappointment, "He didn't take his pills?"

Anger flared in Techno again. Pills. Why did his father have to think *pills* were the solution to all their fucking problems?

In truth, he wasn't even really angry with Wilbur himself. A majority of his anger was sourced at their father and all those crackpot doctors Phil had sent Wil to see that couldn't seem to help him. They gave him pills, sure, yea, that was fantastic- they calmed him down a bit and cleared his head just enough to make him *seem* like a functioning human being- but they never fucking worked and he hated that. He *despised* every idiot that looked at his brother and didn't do a damned thing to

help him, and he came to points where he hated his father for brushing off what was clear to see.

“No...” he growled lowly, “He didn’t. And when will you start seeing that that isn’t the fucking *problem*.” His eyes narrowed at the older man, frowning deeply.

Phil froze, tensing up. He seemed to be irked by the subject, and Techno knew damn well he was poking a bear with a stick, “Techno...we’ve had this conversation a million times, I’m not having this again...” His voice shook slightly, not looking at Techno as he let go of his hand. Techno snapped back quickly, “Dad when are you going to admit to yourself that-”

“Techno, stop.” Phil said firmly.

“That there's something seriously medically wrong with Wilbur-”

“Techno-!”

“That is far worse and more complex than just simply depression!” Techno screamed, refusing to shut up as he started to blow up again, “He’s fucking ranting and raving about nonsense, he thinks Schlatts in love with him and just doesn’t realize it, he- he isn’t okay and those stupid fucking pills do nothing! Their bullshit!!”

Phil’s expression was blank, a dead look in his eyes. Techno stared right back, panting as he tried to keep himself again. Fear slowly settled in his stomach, paling as it slowly dawned on him what he’d just said. His father’s next words were chilling as he slowly stood.

“You’re grounded.”

Techno’s eyes widened, a mix of fear and anger rising as Phil turned away, “No dinner, you’ll stay here and think what you did. As for Bad...” Phil seemed to think for a moment, before looking back at Techno with a sharp glare that made him flinch, “He’ll be staying with me until you learn to behave yourself again.”

Techno’s entire body was freezing cold, unable to process what had happened as fear took him over. His angel. What was Phil going to do to his angel? No- no no no-

He stumbled up and ran to the door just to hear it lock on him. He hit his fist against it, only to immediately cry out as pain shot up his arm, looking once more at his bleeding hands and letting out a frustrated sob. Cursing himself for letting his anger get away from him, Techno dragged himself to huddle in the corner again, nursing his injured hands with frustration and eyeing the door with pure hate.

Completely powerless, all he could do was sit and wait- after all, Phil was the only one with the key. His brothers couldn't help him even if they wanted to.

=x=

Tubbo let Tommy drag him along through the hallway, footsteps light on the floorboards that so easily creaked. The blonde had suggested video games to pass the time, and well, Tubbo was never one to pass that up. Being confined to the bedroom all day was boring, and he had *slightly* gotten over fearing for his life by now.

The two stopped in what looked like the living room and Tommy got on his knees, "Gimme a second."

He looked around the room, quiet as Tommy sorted through his things. He jumped as he spotted another male in the corridor, dusting off an antique looking table of pictures with a distant look.

"Who's...that?"

Tommy looked over his shoulder before making a disgruntled noise, "That's just Bad. He's Techno's pet."

Without warning, the noirettes head shot up, bright green eyes piercing into him. He looked suddenly anxious, and Tommy spoke nonchalantly, "You can go talk to him for now if you want, might take me a bit to get this shit set up."

Tubbo didn't respond, swallowing before walking over hesitantly, "Ah...h-hi?"

"Hi..." Bad echoed back, a deep frown on his lips, "Your...Tommy's pet, aren't you?"

"I guess?"

He only looked further upset by this, sighing, "Tubbo- right?- Look I...you..." He took a deep breath before coming closer, voice hushed, "Tommy...he's a *decent* kid. Really. Just..." He seemed to be looking for the right words, " *Confused*. Very, very confused and very misguided. But- just-

the others are...Well specifically his two brothers, their *also* very, severely misguided, but in different ways. I want you to listen to me, okay? You have to listen to me if you're going to survive."

He stressed the importance of his words, and Tubbo looked wary, simply nodding slowly. Bad picked up another picture frame, pretending to clean it as he continued quietly, "I've been here...a year? two years? J-just- A long time. Tommy's dad is Phil, and as you can imagine he's the one who makes most of the final decisions. Whatever you do, avoid getting on his bad side." He picked up a picture that looked like a family photo, pointing out a man in the center with blonde hair and dark blue eyes, "H-he can be...moderately lax, I guess..."

He then pointed to another much more frightening man with long hair that was dyed a dusky pink and with blood red eyes- most likely from contacts, "...Techno. He's the eldest. He has anger management issues but I've been *attempting* to help him improve. If he tells you to stop doing something- if you can, just stop. It's most likely irritating him and will make him lash out. Even better, though, would just be to stay out of his way."

Next, he pointed to a brunette in the picture, looking to be only an inch or two shorter than Techno, "Wilbur- just- avoid him as much as possible. If he rambles just pretend you believe him. He's not the most sound of mind at all..." He trailed off, frowning slightly as he turned to look at him with stern eyes, "Never, ever mention this part to Phil, that clear?"

Tubbo nodded, sudden fear creeping up his spine once more as Bad continued, "Wilbur is...a lot of things. He doesn't take no for an answer a lot of the time. He's insistent. He snaps easily so just- don't try to insist on being right. He's pushy, arrogant, he's..." Bad trailed off once again, this time staring at the photograph, "He's malicious, but pitiful. I... *dislike* him, but I also feel bad for him. He often tries to appeal to Phil, seeks approval, he's sadistic and..."

Bad's voice breaks, his hands shaking, "Phil is insistent that Wilbur has depression. He doesn't acknowledge that...that Wil shows a *lot* of symptoms of some sort of Schizophrenic disorder- at least what I've read up on before all this happened and seen in a friend of mine who has it. Do I think it's the reason he acts in the disgusting ways that he does sometimes?"

Before Tubbo could answer, Bad went on firmly as if merely talking to himself now, "No. Because generally, people with Schizophrenia are more a danger to themselves than to others. It's not okay to blame it on the illness when it's who and what's around them that influences them-"

"Bad...?"

He put a hand on the man's arm and he jumped, hands fumbling with the photograph before hugging it tightly to his chest. He looks lost for a moment, eyes a bit glassy as he looks to Tubbo again. He sniffles a bit, "S-sorry I just...forgive that little tangent- every day I seem to run off with my sentences more and more....Just be very, *very* wary of Wilbur..." He mumbled, "Lastly there's ah...there's Tommy. You know him. Tommy is...like I said, he's a good kid- I guess. He's...he's very lonely, and with the rest of his family I can understand why. He has a lot of behavioral issues, but he tries at times and it's almost endearing..." Bad shakily reached out, putting a comforting hand on Tubbo's bicep, "There's written rules I like to follow around here and...they've kept me alive for this long, so I recommend you follow them..."

Speechless, Tubbo nodded for what felt like the hundredth time, and Bad fumbled with the picture frame, opening it to show a folded piece of paper behind the picture. He took it out and quickly put the picture back together, handing Tubbo the little paper, "Read it when you can. I-it's nothing bad so- I don't think you'll get in trouble if you're caught reading it, but be safe anyway-"

There was a call from upstairs and Bad stiffened, swallowing as he put the picture down, "I-i've gotta go. Just- just read it, okay? Promise me?"

"A-alright..." Tubbo was lost, but he promised anyway. Before Bad could run off, a question came to mind and he grabbed the noirettes wrist, "Wait-"

Bad looked at him with confusion, and Tubbo bit his lip, curiosity undying, "A...are there others? Or is it just you and me?" Bad looked nervous before uttering, "There's...also Schlatt-"

"Wait- Schlatt? Jonathan Schlatt? One of the first missing cold cases whose bodies were never found?"

Bad nodded, and Tubbo gawked, "Surely not...he...he's *alive* ? Pretty much everybody thinks he's long dead!" The noirette let out a humorless laugh, "Yeah? I'm pretty sure they think i'm dead too. And...well, he probably would be if I wasn't here-"

"Bad!"

The two gave a start from the second call of the noirettes name, and Bad paled, "Okay I- I really need to go. I'll answer your questions later, I promise-"

Before Tubbo could stop him again, Bad dashed up the stairs as he called up, "Coming!!!"

The brunette stood frozen in place for a few, before backing up and turning into the living room once more. Tommy was still trying to set up the console, and he sat down, looking at the folded paper in his hands. Slowly, he unfolded it, noticing how old and worn the paper looked. It felt incredibly fragile, having all sorts of little rips, tears, pencil smudges, and was written on by different colored pencils, pens, and markers.

At the top were different names in different handwriting and colors.

Samantha was written in soft pink cursive. Scott was written in cyan blue messy print, Schlatt was in shaky, messy handwriting, and Bad was in a neat, loopy red handwriting.

Victims rules & tips to staying alive. was the title, and while he struggled, Tubbo tried to read down the list every so slowly- each rule in a different handwriting.

1. If Phil asks you to do something, do it. It's generally an easy, simple task and he can be very patient.
2. Play nice. Phil has patience, but not if you're rude.
3. Tip: If Phil comments about something he likes on you, keep wearing it if you can. It's like extra points and will improve his mood.
4. **Phil has a music box on his dresser. Be careful with it, as it's very precious to him.**
5. **Don't ever try to run if the doors left unlocked while they are out. It's a test they all do on us "pets", and failure could be deadly.**
6. **Stick close to whoever picked you, as they are the most likely to protect you against the others.**
7. **Phil likes his "special meals" every Friday and during special days like birthdays. He likes his meat medium rare.**
8. **Wilbur likes it when the person he's torturing screams. DON'T GIVE THAT MOTHERFUCKER THE SATISFACTION!**
9. If Wilbur corners you, and somebody else is in the house- especially your "caretaker"- scream. Scream for help as loud as you can, because any one of the others will stop him.
10. If Techno is having trouble sleeping, ask Phil for the music box and play it for him.
11. Techno has a temper. If he tells you to stop doing something, it's a warning he's getting agitated, so try your best to stop it if you can.

12. Never, ever try to take an electronic that's lying around.
13. If Wilbur is rambling nonsense, just pretend like you agree and understand and he'll eventually leave you alone.
14. Never try and take Wilbur's alcohol from him. EVER.

"Aha!" Tommy shouted and Tubbo quickly folded up the paper again, stuffing it in his pocket. The console turned on, and he grinned widely before looking at Tubbo, "So, what do you wanna play?"

"Ah...d-do...you have..." He struggled to think of a name before finally deciding on one, "Mario Odyssey?"

Tommys eyes lit up, "Hell yea I do!" He rummaged through a small shelf of games and Tubbo sighed in relief, his mind still stuck on the list of rules. How many years had that been around? How many "victims" had there been? Who were Samantha and Scott?

And most importantly...how many years has this family gotten away with this, and would he *ever* escape?

Chapter End Notes

Just like I said up top, Wilbur's actions cannot be blamed on him having schizophrenia for multiple reasons, but another thing is that schizophrenia only really kicks in around your 20s and Wilbur's actions predate that by a LONG time. Why the boys act the way they do daily has a lot more to do with external influence and simply just elements around them, not any mental illness.

Stalemate.

Chapter Notes

BIG TW IN THIS CHAPTER FOR SLIGHT SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

If you would like to skip this bit, then starting from where there's this //, skip ahead until you // again.

Sorry if this chapters a lil bit shorter than usual <3

I have a category in my server dedicated to this fic, so come on in! I'd love to meet y'all and hear feedback, plus you get notifications about new chapters the moment it's updated!

<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The master bedroom door loomed over him ominously, hands shaking as he hesitated to knock on the hardwood. He knew the situation; either he was going to knock and go in, or Phil was going to come out and drag him in. He could tell by the older man's voice earlier that he was irritated, so the second option was particularly unpleasant.

Bad released a shaky breath before finally rapping his knuckles against the door, jumping a bit as Phil called from behind it, "Come in, and close the door behind you."

He slowly turned the doorknob, slipping into the room anxiously. He hesitated to shut the door but did it anyway, his heart sinking as it felt like the final click of the lock sealed his fate. Turning to Phil, he felt his gut twist as he saw the older man's dark blue eyes boring into him.

There was this unsettling air around the man that was so pain-stakingly displayed. Like he didn't care at all if Bad was afraid.

Which, in all honesty, he wasn't.

The room was dim, only a bit of sun peaking through the curtains. The master bedroom was moderately large, with a king sized bed in the center, dark green painted walls, the furniture all being made of some sort of dark oak. There was a large circular window with Payne's grey sheer curtains that had a small table and two chairs sat at, a vase of assorted flowers by the bedside, and a couple of different picture frames. On the table there laid a chess mat, every single chess piece already set and ready.

Phil himself was in his usual attire, semi-long hair tied back, wearing a deep green unbuttoned button-up with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows, a white undershirt, and dusty jeans. He sat at one of the chairs by the chess table- behind the black chess pieces, with a large hunting knife in his

hands, the tip pressing to his index finger as he twirled it absentmindedly.

He didn't look happy in the slightest, eye's narrowed with his lips pressed in a thin line as he frowned, shoulders tense and jaw slightly set in place.

"You...y-you called?" Bad barely managed to squeak out, growing increasingly skittish. Phil merely sat up a bit straighter and gestured to the other chair, "Sit."

Bad quickly did as he was asked, sitting at the chair and facing the white chess pieces. He eyed the board nervously- it had been a long while since he had played, but he knew he was decent enough. Phil turned in his seat towards him, looking at him expectantly. He still had this dark look about him, and Bad gripped his hands as he willed them to stop shaking.

He reached forward, hesitantly moving a piece. Phil hummed lowly before reaching and moving a piece as well before uttering, "Techno pushed his luck today."

Bad stiffened as he held his own piece, gulping as he slowly set it down, "O-oh...?"

"Mhm. Gave me lip about Wil's medication for his condition again- even though Wil's doing perfectly fine with it..." Phil picked up a pawn, briefly looking up at Bad searching eyes, "Don't you think so?" He set down the pawn and the noirette shivered at the warning in the elder's tone.

He nodded obediently in agreement, shifting only slightly uncomfortably. Of course, he didn't actually think that- he knew as much as Techno that the medication Wil was taking were bullshit, but considering the man in front of him was not just a serial killer with a seriously high body count, but also wielding a *hunting knife*, he simply agreed with whatever the other man would say to save his own ass.

While he might have been firmly standing and outspoken about what he did believe and didn't believe morally before, now Bad mostly operated on his basic survival instinct.

Phil seemed to lighten up at his answer, setting down the pawn. Bad picked up another piece and moved it with Phil following suit, a few more turns passing until the blond spoke again, "Dove, do you think I'm a terrible father?"

Bad took one of Phil's knights, setting it aside as he tried to think of a proper answer, "Well...I-I don't really think you're *terrible* ..." He began, nervously watching as Phil moved a bishop into position on the board, "Just...going about some things the wrong way, I guess..." He managed, moving his queen. Phil didn't react, simply continuing the game in silence. One by one they took each other's pieces, completely focused on the game until...

"Stalemate."

Bad's eyes widened in surprise before he felt slight disappointment. Phil sat back again, "You're good. Schlatt lost to me when I had him play." He slowly stood and walked around the table, looming over Bad as the hunting knife glinted in his hand, "Now, onto the reason I called you here." He drawled, "Like I told you, Techno pushed his luck with me. Now I have to punish him somehow, and I thought what better way than taking away his toy?"

//////

The noirette's blood ran cold as Phil stepped back and motioned him to stand. He obeyed with shaking legs, fear in his eyes as he tried to keep his breathing even. There was a small yelp as Phil reached and pulled him forwards by his arm, having a painful, vice-like grip. He pressed the sharp side of the blade to Bad's cheek, making him freeze in terror as Phil continued almost casually, "At first, I thought about cutting you up a bit. Leaving some scars since you know how he gets when he sees some type of injury or mark on you. Just a small warning..." He pressed the knife down slightly, making Bad whimper a bit as he anticipated the oncoming pain, "But...well I figured that would be really quite a shame to do, wouldn't it?" He pulled Bad right against him and drew the knife down slowly until it was under Bad's chin, forcing him to look straight up. Phil leaned down and Bad resisted the urge to start squirming and fighting as he felt lips brushing his neck with a slight scratch on stubble. Phil might have mostly been the one to save Bad from Wilbur's advances, but he knew Phil got some sort of sick sadistic pleasure from his discomfort and fear when he was the cause.

He felt the older's hot breath on his neck, voice low and hushed as he murmured, "You have such a pretty face you know...I'd really hate to mark it up for something one of my sons did. Sometimes, I really regret handing you over to him without a second thought. Unlike Wil, he, *unfortunately*, doesn't play nice when it comes to sharing..." He tsked. Bad felt his heart going a hundred miles per hour as Phil continued, moving to his jaw, "So I'm giving you a chance, little Dove. I'm going to keep you in this very room for the next three days and nights. If you can behave yourself and do everything I say, then you can go by around Wednesday morning. If you fuck up though..." He felt the other grin against his neck, tears gathering in his eyes and threatening to spill over in fear as Phil snickered lowly, "Well, I don't even know what I'll do. But I just know Techno won't be very happy about it, and you *definitely* won't." He let go and Bad stood trembling in place, completely taken by fear as the older man had a look of pure sadistic pleasure on his face, "Do I make myself clear?"

"Y...yes sir..."

//////

"Good. You aren't to leave this room at all. I'll bring you food and drinks, you can read any of the

things on my shelves in the meantime, and if anybody comes knocking who isn't me: ignore them."

He nodded and Phil hummed, turning heel, "Good. I'll be back later tonight. Don't disappoint me, Dove."

Bad didn't respond as Phil opened the door and walked out, shutting it and hearing it be locked from the outside. He practically collapsed in fear, chest tightening as his emotions caved in on him in a cloud of disgust and panic. He rubbed the side of his neck frantically, quiet sobs leaving him as he shook his head.

He hated this place.

He hated this fucking horror show. He wanted out. He wanted to disappear and not have to think about Techno or Wilbur or **Phil** .

It was times like these where he wished Techno *had* killed him.

=x=

"So?"

Tommy watched as Tubbo slipped on the hoodie, his hair a mess. The other teen gave him an estranged look, "How...the fuck did you know my *size* ?" Tommy gave a big grin that instantly gave Tubbo an answer, "Doesn't matter. Do you like it?"

"It's...nice, I guess-"

Tubbo was cut off by the camera flash, wincing a bit. He absolutely hated that Tommy kept doing that- he swore he was going to end up breaking that stupid camera.

There was a sharp knock at the door and the door was opened, a man with blond hair and dark blue eyes peeked his head through with a smile, "Tommy- bud could you do me a favor?"

Tubbo shivered, recognizing him as Tommy's father and from the photo Bad showed him. The teen whined before standing up and setting the camera down, "What is it?"

"Schlatt needs his bandages changed, but both your brothers, Bad, and I are a bit...busy. Could you do that for me?"

Tommy hesitated at the request, looking between Tubbo and his father before sighing, "Fine...Tubbo, stay right here, I'll be back in a bit."

"I'm...pretty sure I can't go anywhere so okay...?"

Tommy slipped out of the room, shutting and locking the door behind him. Tubbo took a deep breath, looking around the room. There *had* to be something around here...

He rummaged around the room- through the closet, under the bed, under nightstands and in the desk. Nothing. Not even a random key or notes. He eye'd the trunk at the foot of Tommy's bed silently before moving to try opening it- surprised to find it unlocked. He opened it slowly, rummaging around some more clothes before his hand caught something. Grabbing it, he pulled it out to find it was a photo album.

"Drystan Family, Gen V."

'Gen V...?' Tubbo thought. Opening it, he could see that it was three fourths filled. A bunch of clipped papers fell out the back, and Tubbo picked one up and unfolded it, eyes widening as he read name after name in small, precise writing. Creeped out, he put down the papers and went back to the book. Tubbo's eyes scanned the photos and captions, flipping through the book.

There was one with Phil and some woman smiling towards the camera. Phil was in a suit and looked much younger, both he and the lady having to be around eighteen or nineteen. The lady wore something reminiscent of a wedding dress, having brown hair and sky blue eye's like Tommy's. She was smiling like Phil but...it seemed faker. There was pain in her eyes and the smile seemed so incredibly strained. Under the photo, there was a simple caption: "Phil and Samantha. Family of 2."

He kept looking, seeing the appearance of a baby with brown hair and sky blue eyes like the mothers in the photo. Eventually, that baby turned into a toddler and in each photo of the woman and the toddler, she looked genuinely happy. But with the appearance of Phil in the photos, she seemed to force herself to smile. She looked so, so *tired* .

Another baby appeared, with the same brown hair and dark blue eyes, and there were photos of the toddler- maybe three or four now- interacting with the baby happily. In every photo where she looked at Phil, her eyes seemed vacant and dead- but in every photo where she looked at one of the children, there was a little light in her eyes. There was another family photo like the wedding one- with Phil resting a seemingly gentle hand on Techno's head while holding Wilbur with his free arm- and the caption read, "Phil, Samantha, Techno, and Wilbur. Family of 4."

A few more photos, it showed pictures of the two little ones playing happily- Wilbur being three and Techno being five.

Tubbo froze as he reached yet another portrait, only this time...

There stood Phil with Techno, Wilbur, and a toddler in Phil's arms with Phil's blond hair and his mother's sky blue eyes. Phil looked tired, with a small half genuine and half forced smile- a little bit of light lost in his eyes.

"Phil, Techno, Wilbur, and Thomas. Family of 4."

But no Samantha.

In the following photo's it was the same, only the boys were growing older and older. At some point- when he looked around fifteen or sixteen- Techno's hair went from natural brown to being dyed a dusky pink, and his eyes went from sky blue to a crimson red.

He didn't get to put away the book before the door unlocked and swung open.

"I'm back, and I brought sn-"

Tommy froze as he saw the brunette, eyes widening a bit. Tubbo felt pure fear, heart speeding up as the blond remained silent. There was a flash of uncertainty on Tommy's face before he stepped in, shutting and locking the door, "So...you...found the family photo album." He said, looking surprisingly more uncomfortable than angry. Tubbo let out a breath he didn't know he was holding, feeling his hand still slightly trembling, "Y-yea...I...I hope you don't mind."

"I don't- as long as you don't damage it." He walked over and set down a large bowl of something Tubbo recognized, eyes lighting up, "Monster munch?"

"Mhm." Tommy watched as Tubbo popped a few in his mouth, humming contently, before looking

at the book again, "You look like you're a happy family."

" *We were* a happy family."

"Were...?"

Tommy sneered a bit, "Yea. *Were*. Fuckin'- past tense. Not so much anymore." he uttered with clear disdain, frowning deeply. Tubbo grimaced slightly, flipping to a picture of Samantha, "What was she like? Your...your mother."

Tommy pulled his knees in a fetal position, looking away, "I dunno...I didn't really know her. Techno and Wilbur say she was nice though, so there's that."

"You didn't..." Tubbo trailed off, having it suddenly dawn on him what Tommy meant and stopping himself. Tommy bit his lip, snatching the book and the papers, shoving them back inside and shutting the book before burying it in the trunk again. He slammed the lid shut a bit louder than he meant to, wincing and grumbling, "Sorry I just- I really don't wanna talk about it. Can we do something else?"

Feeling like he was pushing it, Tubbo nodded, agreeing. Soon enough, Tommy had pulled out a deck of cards and the two started playing as Tubbo's mind filled with questions. He needs Tommy's trust. He needed Tommy to start actually telling him things and opening up- and maybe through that he'll find a way to escape.

Maybe...

Hopefully.

=x=

The next morning, Quackity decided to work somewhere other than his stuffy old bedroom.

"Black coffee and two cinnamon scones, please."

The barista nodded as Quackity let out an exhausted sigh. His eyes stung from a lack of sleep, eyelids slightly heavy as he shook his head. He'd been up all night surveying the tapes and fell asleep on his desk for a few hours, so now his back hurt and his neck felt stiff from that.

He had called Ted's number and after not getting an answer, he had left him a message telling him about Traves giving him his number and that he was looking into the disappearances- starting with Jonathan Schlatt. It was now almost twelve, so he reckoned he'd get a call back at any moment.

Quackity thanked the barista as they handed him the coffee and small baggy, walking to a table by an outlet and sitting down. It was in a relatively vacant area of the shop against the wall, so he figured he'd get some relative peace and privacy for a good bit. Putting the stuff down, he opened up his satchel and pulling out his laptop and charger, plugging it in and continuing to unpack until he had everything he needed. Unlocking his phone, he plugged it into this computer and opened the record file, plugging his headphones in and slipping them on over his beanie.

He took a drink, wincing a bit as he burned his tongue before taking out and biting one of the scones. Clicking play, Minx's voice rang in his ears again.

This time, instead of taking notes, Quackity closed his eyes and tried to imagine it in his head.

"The night Schlatt disappeared, he had worked a bit later than usual. Now, usually, Vinnie's brings in a lot of shady types- all really suspicious guys who are just there for a cheap glass of alcohol, the cunts- so of course, I don't usually pay anybody any mind for actin' a bit off. But- there was this *one* guy that really just tipped off all the red flags for me."

"Oh?"

"Mhm. Real college boy-esque, guitar playin', slightly emo lookin' bitch- real tall and lanky too, maybe about six four to six five? Could tell he had brown fluffy hair and was wearing a beanie an' trench coat."

He tried to create a picture of the guy in his head; Really tall and lanky, around six four to five. Brown fluffy hair, beanie and trench coat.

"He sat in this booth that nobody really likes, 'cause you gotta crane your neck look at the fookin tv, and the lightbulb above it's always flickerin'! The whole night, from around...I think it was around seven to around nine- just thirty minutes before I left and forty-five minutes before Schlatt did- but the entire time, the man didn't even order a drink! He was just watchin' like a damn creep, and I don't even think Schlatt knew or noticed- and after a while I just chose to ignore it."

He tried to imagine himself in Schlatt's place. Behind the bar, making a glass of something, Minx sitting right by with a beer. Not even paying attention to that corner booth with the flickering light and bad view of the tv, containing a man watching from the shadows who didn't even order a single drink.

Quackity let out a frustrated grunt as he couldn't get a clear image in his head. He took another swig of coffee and a bite of one of the scones, replaying the recording and shutting his eyes again. He repeated this a few times, slowly getting increasingly frustrated after each failed attempt until he was nearly ready to toss his headphones.

After the 7th attempt, he felt a small tap on his shoulder that made him jump, head whipping to see who it had come from. His eyes found a cute guy that looked around his age, with curly chestnut brown hair and eyes, wearing a multicolored hoodie that looked hand-sewn, and black jeans. There was a sheepish expression on his face, cheeks slightly pink- and Quackity couldn't help but notice another guy leaning against the table a bit behind him, arms crossed, eyes hiding behind white circular shades, and a smug grin on his face.

He slipped his headphones off and cocked his head curiously, confused. The man in the hoodie bit his lip, looking anxious before managing to speak up, "Y-you're uh...I..." He laughed nervously, rubbing the back of his neck, "S-sorry I'm not usually like t-this uh-"

The man behind him rolled his head as if to show he was rolling his eyes before standing up and walking over. He slung an arm around the man in the hoodie's shoulder and spoke much more casually, "What my friend here is *trying* to say- but is making himself look like a bumbling *idiot* in his attempt- is that he thinks you're hot and wants your number. See, now was that so hard?" He teased the light brunette with a smirk. His voice had a slight accent that Quackity noticed, yet just couldn't quite place.

"George!" The other man yelled in offense. Quackity felt his face heat up, stunned as the two bickered. Recordings forgotten, he set his headphones down and turned his attention to the two, snickering a bit at their slight dynamic, "Uh...thanks, I guess?"

The one named George was cackling at the flustered man. He had straighter dark brown hair, wearing a light blue sweater vest over a white dress shirt and dark blue jeans. He put a hand on the table for balance only to yelp loudly as his hand slipped on the papers and made him fall over. Q panicked as some of the papers flew everywhere, creating a mess. The flustered man cringed, "Oh my god- I-I'm Karl and ah- god I'm so sorry here-" He helped the dark brunette up and Quackity stood with a whine, waving them off as if to say "it's whatever."

George and Karl grabbed a few of the papers, helping pick them up. Just before handing them over, George glimpsed at one of the papers and his eyes widened, staring in astonishment, "Wait- hold on, you're investigating that kid's disappearance?"

Quackity froze, realizing which paper he was holding and nodding. Karl's eyes lit up, "Wait- the teenage boy? Tubbo?" He nodded again and the two men exchanged a look before grinning, "That- that's so cool! George and I recently both wrote up reports on that case yesterday- we were gonna hand it in today to get it published."

Quackity's jaw dropped, eyes widening. What kind of luck...

"Seriously? Well..." He hesitated before lowering his voice, "Honestly, I'm not just looking into that case. I'm looking into a few particular past disappearances too."

"Okay that does it- you've gotta tell us. I am *so* not leaving." George grabbed a chair and pulled it to the table, Karl following suit. Quackity looked between them nervous before deciding that he'd just tell them the basics until he knew he could really trust them. He sat back down and put the papers aside, "Well, it started around 2 years ago. I got close online friends with two guys who I've met up with in person a few times and were best friends. Guy named 'Jonathan Schlatt' goes missing, is presumed dead, but one of my friends- Bad Halo- keeps investigating the case. However, not long after, Bad goes missing too after he left in the middle of the night after a massive fight with my other friend, Skeppy. Skeppy feels super guilty and is accused of killing Bad, but after a year he's been announced not guilty. Consumed by guilt, he dives headfirst into Bad's old work and tries to find out what happened to him. But...well, one night I'm on call with him, and he seems to have made a link when the call ends. Days later, he's declared missing. Just like Bad."

George and Karl listened with full intrigue as Quackity went through it, seeming genuinely interested. Karl nods as he finishes, "Yea- I've heard about those three too. I mean- those two were big on the news, but Skeppy? They did like one report and that was it. Same with Tubbo. It's like somebody is paying them out."

"You're a local?"

"Born and bred~" Karl chuckled. Quackity's eyes lit up with excitement. This was *exactly* what he needed.

Plus, it was time he made a few friends around here anyway.

George and Karl have joined the fray~! <3

Sparks.

Chapter Notes

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<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

BIG TW FOR IMPLIED SELF HARM DURING THIS BEGINNING BIT, AND LATER GORE.

"So you really think they're connected?" Karl murmured. After spending several hours at the shop, they had eventually made their way to Karl and George's shared apartment and were going over more of the evidence. Quackity nodded, "They have to be- it's too much of a coincidence otherwise."

Looking at the clock, it was well past 9:00pm, but the three of them were too focused to care. A loud ping broke concentration, and on the table George's phone lit up, "Sorry- give me a second."

The brit snatched up his phone and looked at the screen, and his face twisted into visible disgust and disturbance. Concerned, Quackity spoke up, "Who is it?"

George looked hesitant, quickly standing up, "It's- it's my brother-"

"You don't *have* a brother?" Karl spoke with confusion and the dark brunette winced, "I just- I gotta answer it. I'll be on second." He quickly hurried to the kitchen and Quackity watched suspiciously. He started to get up before Karl stopped him, shaking his head, "I...I might have an idea what this is about..."

"Oh?"

"George has...been having a bit of a *problem* lately. There's a guy who is just- *really* obsessed with him. Not sure why or to what extent but...yea."

Quackity winced. Jesus, did *everybody* in this town have some sort of stalker? This was getting old

at this point...

A loud ringing interrupts them and it's then Quackity's turn to excuse himself, looking excitedly at the name on the number. He stepped out into the hall and answered quickly, attempting not to come off as too eager, "Hello, this is Quackity speaking."

"Heya- it's Ted. You uhhh...called about..." There's a long pause and a hushed whisper before the man clears his throat, "A...about Schlatt?"

"Correct. I have some new information that I would like to question you and specifically your roommate about."

A pause followed by a loud snort, "Roommate? I'm sorry, I don't have a roommate. Haven't had one for about seven months."

Quackity's nose scrunched up in confusion. Had...Traves given him the wrong information?

"A man named Traves had given me your name and number."

"Traves? Shit, we haven't talked in so long- I really need to call him..." He trailed off before picking up again, "What exactly did he say?"

"He told me you were the caretaker of a guy named Slime?"

There was a loud laugh from the background and Ted began chuckling, yelling playfully at the person laughing to quiet down while seeming to stifle his own laughter, leaving Quackity even more confused, "Sorry about that," Ted began, and Quackity could hear the smile on his face, "I can see where the confusion is coming from now. Traves might've neglected to mention that I'm not just Slime's caretaker, but also his husband-"

There was a hollering whoop in the background, "Seven months and don't you forget it baby!!!"

Quackity snorted, a smile dawning on his own face as Ted seemed to be shouting back something muffled. The muffle of the voices made it clear Ted was covering his phone, and after a moment he came back snickering, "S-Sorry! Just that SOMEONE-" There was clear laughter at the mock irritation in his voice, "Can't keep his mouth shut!"

The noirette covered his mouth with his hand to keep from smiling too wide- this was sickeningly sweet.

"It's fine. Anyway, is there any time I could maybe come over and ask some questions?"

"Hm...well I don't see why not. Will Wednesday, 2:00pm work?"

"Yea-"

There was a loud shout through the wall that made Quackity jump, "George what the hell?!"

"Y-yea- Wednesday will work just fine- i'm sorry, I gotta go." He hung up abruptly and went back into the apartment, hearing crying. The hair on his arms stood on end and he quietly crept to the kitchen, peaking in.

"Why do you keep doing this, what is going on with you?!" Karl practically hissed under his breath. The kitchen knife laid on the kitchen floor, the sharp end shining with something that looked like blood while the same crimson liquid was in droplets on the tiled floor.

A bunch of medical supplies were on the counter, the front of Karl's hoodie having blood wiped on it, and Georges vest and jeans being stained with the same thing. George was shaking as Karl was stitching a large laceration on George's palm, tears rolling down his face as he whimpered, "m...sorry..."

"George you- you can't keep doing this okay? At this point I know this isn't just self-harm, it's self-mutilation- what is going through your head?!"

Quackity tuned out as he heard a soft ping noise, looking back to see George's phone lit up on the table. He walked over, looking on the screen to see new text messages, the previews popping up quickly. He only got to read a bit before it was gone.

Bastard

Then that's all I want for now. Go bandage yourself. (*sent at 9:21*)

Love you! (*sent at 9:22*)

There was an eerie feeling that crept up his spine, a deep frown forming on his face. What was all this about?

What were Karl and George hiding?

=x=

"Did you know that arson is the easiest crime to get away with?"

Tubbo tried not to be sick at what he was watching. Tommy's voice was just a bit louder than Wilbur's in the basement, but it definitely wasn't enough to mask the sound of the tied-down man's screaming, nor the sickening sound of slicing meat and cracking bones.

He swore he was about to puke the moment Tommy had dragged him to the basement and he'd been hit with the heavy, putrid odor of *death*, but now he was certain he was seconds away from barfing.

The brunette didn't know how Tommy was able to make small talk like this, but it was almost like he was desensitized to it, not even flinching. Wilbur was singing- which, by itself, would've frankly been nice to listen to if not for the fact he was currently using a hammer to snap a man's ribs one by one- and an apparently hidden room was open to them in view of Tommy's chemistry lab, where he was currently mixing something together.

He kept talking about "arson" and that he'd always liked fire. But...that was all Tubbo could comprehend. Because again, he was mostly focused on the grotesque sight before him. Wilbur stopped suddenly, his eyes searching for a second before speaking up, "Tommy, how much are two brown eyes with twenty twenty vision goin' for on the black market right now?"

Tommy paused, "Uhh...I think seven hundred and fifty two per eye?"

"Ugh, cheap! They are hard to get!"

"I think it's 'cause brown eyes are just common?"

Wilbur huffed, "Point taken. Green or blue would go for more."

"W-what?!" Tubbo forced out, and Wilbur looked at him before smiling, a glint of malice in his dark blue eyes, "Ooo you've got some pretty icy blue's- pierce right through me. Those could probably go for at least a thousand-"

Tommy tensed at this, whipping around to glare at his brother as he practically barked, "Fuck *off* Wil! Tubbo's off limits!"

The brunette scoffed and rolled his eyes, frowning, "Jesus- you and Techno I swear, always getting all twisted up when I'm just joking around." The blonde growled under his breath, turning away, "Yea, right, call the shit you do to Bad *joking* . Real fuckin' good."

Wilbur huffed, raising his voice, " *Anyway...* " He grabbed something that looked like a melon baller from the wall, "Time to dig out some eyes~"

The man began screaming and pleading again, and Tubbo quickly turned away and covered his ears, unable to take it anymore. After a few moments, there was a rougher voice that spoke up. He uncovered his ears and turned to look at where it was coming from, seeing a man in the corner of Wilbur's area now with his head up. He was tied up onto a chair and looked beat to high hell, and Tubbo remembers initially thinking he was just a corpse.

"Jesus fucking christ Wil, theres a fuckin' kid here, can't ya' just gag the guy?! I'm getting a damn headache!" He snapped before beginning to cough, groaning. His voice was rough and hoarse, sounding like it hurt like hell to talk. Wilbur whined, "But I *like* hearing them scream! You're so mean..."

"Well some of us *don't* , asshole."

The brunette scoffed and rolled his eyes, grabbing a dirty cloth from the ground and shoving it in the man's mouth, "There, *now* will you stop bitching?"

"Finally..."

Tubbo winced at the man's screams that were muffled now, wincing. He couldn't imagine how much it hurt- scratch that, he didn't *want* to imagine how much it hurt. He looked away again, eyes focusing on what Tommy was doing again. He heard more humming, muffled screeches, slicing, cutting-

He moved to the side of the work bench, over a trash can, and vomited his breakfast.

He hated this place.

=x=

Bad dug through the old trunks, trying to find *something* to entertain himself with. A bunch of albums, papers, and random junk laid scattered on the attic floor around him.

After the first few hours, he'd already cleaned the master bedroom top to bottom, and after that Phil had opened up the door to the attic and told him he could rummage around there if he was quiet. So he did.

And so far, he'd found nothing of real value to him. There was a box of old cassette tapes and a tape recorder, but after realizing they were recordings of tortures, he had shoved them aside. There were albums labeled after generations of the family, newspaper clippings, an old wedding gown, trunks of clothing and-

His hand brushed something firm and solid, and he gently grabbed it, pulling it out and looking at it. It was an old-fashioned tin with the label scratched out, and as he uncapped it he scrunched up his nose in distaste at the smell of gasoline.

Bad screwed the cap back on and felt its weight in his hand, astonished to feel it was still half full. He rummaged more around the trunk and found a bundle of slightly burnt newspaper articles.

"Balin Town Arsonist strikes again!" were in a huge font as the front, with a large building set alight in the photo of the newspaper. It was in black and white, and as he read it he figured it had to be from before Phil's time.

Doing more digging, he pulled out something bundled in cloth and pulled it out, unwrapping it to find it was an old, blunt and beaten up machete. He squinted to read a name at the handle, seeing a faint initial of "E."

"E..?"

He only really knew of one "E" in the family, and that was the boys' cousin Eret. He was...pleasant- far more pleasant than the others- and seemed rather normal. Then again, so did Dream and Sapnap, but in the end he found out the hard way they were *far* from normal.

As they sat at the dinner table, Tommy seemed to be having a rather excited conversation with their guest. Bad had learned a few things about him since his arrival. The man's name was Eret, he was their cousin, he lived off-the-grid, he was blind in his left eye and sensitive to light- which explained why he wore sunglasses indoors-, he was an avid hunter, and just like the rest of the family he was freakishly tall.

However, Bad didn't find himself as intimidated by Eret as the others.

When Eret arrived, he was smiling softly and he looked like a rather gentle person. He held himself with some sort of presence, he was polite and seemed to care about his own manners, he treated Bad like a decent human being- hell, he just seemed like a generally laid back and sweet person.

Wilbur was silent, merely pushing his food around on his plate and glaring at the other brunette, while Techno seemed unbothered by his presence. Eret held the best conversation with Tommy and Phil though, and what was strange to Bad was that he hadn't touched a single thing on his plate. Much to his dismay, soon found out why.

"How have the hunts been going, if you don't mind me asking." Phil had inquired.

"Oh- funny you ask! I recently had my biggest hunt yet, and I really don't think I've had so much fun in years." He grinned widely and Phil smirked, "Really now? Mind telling us?"

"Well, the main game put up a brilliant fight- though his competition gave him a bit of trouble. I helped him deal with 'em a few times every now and then, but he did such a brilliant job of picking them off himself!" Bad stopped midchew as his stomach turned, paying attention to the conversation, "There were a few times where he'd just slip out of my grasp so cleverly...In the end though, I caught him. I caught him, and now he's my little...My little minx..." Eret hummed lowly

and grinned, "The rest of them I just chopped up and skinned for later. I won't have to go hunting for quite a bit, there's enough food to last me quite a while."

In his mind, Bad put the pieces together and was almost sick right then. Eret was a nice, charming guy who was polite and good company.

But just like the rest of this fucked up family, it wasn't killing animals that made him an avid hunter.

*His game were **humans** .*

Bad wrapped up the machete and put it back. While in the back of his mind he wanted to take it, it was too large and too obvious to hide anywhere. He didn't want to take the risk of Phil finding it.

There was nobody in this family that he could fully trust, he'd learned that quickly over time. It was sure as day.

Finding nothing of real value, Bad looked between the old bundles of cloth and the small tin of gasoline. There was no way in hell that Phil would have let him up here if he knew these types of items were here. It would only take him finding a single match to set a fire that would easily engulf the entire house.

...

Bad hid away the tin, putting it in the back of his mind as a last resort before turning to the newspaper articles.

He had a lot of reading to do.

=x=

"Why are we here again?" He raised his voice over the sound of the jet engine's, following his mother down the steps. He grumbled at the way the hard wind blew at his hair, struggling to keep his tie down as they made their way to the car.

He opened his side and slipped it, letting out an annoyed noise at the way he had to hunch a bit. His mother looked at him and snickered before answering, "A friend of mine called in a favor." Her answer was cut and dry simple, and he frowned, "Seriously? *That's it*?"

"Mhm."

"So you're gonna tell me *nothing* about the case?"

"Well do you want to know?"

The car started moving as they slipped on their seatbelts, and he gave his mother a look that screamed, 'Well duh'. She laughed, slipping off her sunglasses and running her hand through her snow-white hair. She reached in her briefcase and pulled out a folder, handing it to him, "A kid in his district went missing and the police aren't doing shit about it. According to him, the towns in this area are fuckin' *plagued* with disappearances where bodies just never show up. That folder is full of the ones only within the past five years to today and who are presumed dead but with no bodies found its undetermined."

He opened the folder, flipping through the profiles as he muttered names to himself, "Scott Major, Jonathan Schlatt, Bad Halo, Tubbo-" He stopped on the last profile, eyes flickering to the picture in surprise.

He kept glancing over at the others as his feet kicked in the water, anxiety clawing at his stomach and mind as he tried to determine whether to approach them or not. They seemed pretty nice, and his mother kept pushing him to approach them- he really wasn't going to get much from just staring...

"Hello?"

He jumped at the voice beside him, looking to see one of them had come over- a boy with bright blue eyes and platinum blonde hair. He wore a soft yellow floral print sundress with a matching sunhat and sandals. There was a soft, anxious smile on his slightly red face as he seemed to shift

from foot to foot. Clearing his throat, he replied, "Ah...Hi...?"

"I'm...Tubbo..." He said slowly, "Me and my friends saw you were staring and were wondering if you wanted to come hang out with us? You uh...seemed pretty lonely."

He felt a smile tug at his lips as he slowly got up, rubbing the back of his neck, "That obvious?" he chuckled nervously, "Yea I'd-I'd love to."

The boy brightened up, eyes full of joy, "Cool! What's your name, by the way?"

"Ranboo."

"I know this kid." He blurted, and his mom looked at him with a raised brow and an amused smile, "Oh? You don't say."

"He was that boy who was at the lake."

"Mhm..."

"He's...missing?"

"Yep. Vanished into thin air."

"...huh."

Ranboo put the folder together again and gave it back to his mom, playing with the cuffs of his gloves, "So...he's the one we're looking for?" His mom nodded again, and he went silent, lost in thought. So this case was personal- he could do that. Of course, he didn't need to- His mother was being nice by bringing him along, so he could just behave and stay out of the way. But there was a deep curiosity digging at him- he wanted to help.

That couldn't be so hard, could it?

Speeding cars & Disturbances.

Chapter Notes

I have a category in my server dedicated to this fic, so come on in! I'd love to meet y'all and hear feedback, plus you get notifications about new chapters the moment it's updated!

<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

TW for more talks about mental health.

On Monday, Tommy has school, and Tubbo is left locked in his room, with frankly, nothing to do. Aside from having to watch somebody get tortured, being kidnapped has been surprisingly uneventful.

Then again, maybe he should be thanking his lucky stars for that.

Staring at the ceiling, Tubbo briefly wonders if there was anybody looking for him. Maybe, maybe not- it was very fifty-fifty. He was a teenager, so that factored...probably.

There was a soft click and he sat up quickly, looking to the door to see Phil. He looked around the room with a slight scowl before his eyes rested on Tubbo with slight amusement, "Good. You're still here." He beckoned Tubbo to follow and he stood cautiously, looking at Phil warily as he made his way to the door. Phil waited patiently before motioning for him to step out into the hallway.

Once he did, Phil shut the door and looked down at him. Tubbo faltered nervously, the warnings on the paper Bad had given him ringing in his head as he looked to the floor.

"Alright, here's the deal," Phil stepped forward and Tubbo's breath faltered as he grabbed his chin forcefully and made him look up at him, eyes narrowing down on the small boy, "Now, unlike the others, Tommy doesn't want to tie you up while he's gone. So, I'm giving you a chance to prove you can be trusted by allowing you free roam to entertain yourself. But *only* if you follow my rules."

Tubbo swallowed dryly, but nodded nervously, the elder's eyes boring into him as he held up one hand, lifting fingers as he listened to the rules, "You are allowed to play videogames and watch tv. You are not allowed on any cellular device you see or any computer you see. You aren't allowed to

go outside. If you want something to eat, come find me. Break anything, I punish you myself- and trust me," He leaned in, warning lacing his tone, "That is the last thing you want, chickadee."

Tubbo shivered, nodding frantically as he tried to pull away, "Y-yes sir..."

Phil smiled pleasantly and let go, stepping back, "Good. I'm glad that we understand each other then."

Without much hesitation, he turns to another staircase going up and climbs it, leaving Tubbo alone. He waits until the older man is out of sight before going down the stairs, the planks creaking beneath his feet. He can see the door. It would be so easy to open it and run for it- he was small, so once he was in the woods he'd be pretty hard to spot...

Tubbo quickly shook away the idea though, listing the facts to himself.

He was on a farm, in the middle of a wooded area. He didn't know how far it was between here and town, and there was no doubt they knew the area better than he did. He wouldn't win in a fight against Phil, either.

...So maybe he could plan. Figure out things about the house.

He went to the kitchen and opened a drawer, rifling around until he found an unused notepad. He grabbed a pencil from a pen holder, and began jotting down details as he walked around the house. He counted the windows, quietly tested how loose they were, noted which had tears in the screens.

Another plank creaked under his foot, and he silently started jotting notes as he looked around.

-Find something to subtly mark the creaky planks.

-Found alarm. System is activated.

-Main bedrooms are on the second floor, but the master bedroom is seemingly on the third.

-Everything is organized neatly.

-Hidden rooms??

-Basement is locked.

Hearing footsteps, Tubbo quickly stuffed the notes under one of the sitting couch pillows and flipped on the tv, pretending to be scrolling. He felt eyes in the back of his head for a few before Phil went into the kitchen, seemingly making something. After a bit longer, he spoke up, "I'm going out to the barn. I'll be back shortly."

He listened as Phil left through the back door, finally releasing a sigh of relief. It was weird. As scary as it was, at that moment, it felt much less like a kidnapping, and more like...a stay at a friend's house whose parents were scarily strict.

He stopped on some animal documentary and watched, taking breaths to calm himself. He would escape. It didn't matter how long it took- he was going to escape...

At least...he hoped so.

=x=

After school, Techno is the one to pick Tommy up. It took one mention of a migraine for Tommy to shut up the entire time they drove- as much as he liked annoying his brother, he knew Techno was already irritable and making his migraine worse wouldn't do anything more than make Techno detest him even more.

In the back of his mind, he faintly misses when Wilbur used to be the one to pick him up. With Wilbur, every now and then they would have days where they would blast music, speed around the emptier roads, grab junk food and just...have fun. Moments where he felt normal. Tommy loves Techno, he really does, but he hates the quiet tension in the car, and he hates not rambling about how shit his day was.

Wilbur isn't as carefree as that anymore, though. He's not even allowed to legally drive anymore. He still does, yea, despite having his license revoked- but Tommy isn't allowed to go driving with him.

Not after the incident.

...Nothing had really been the same after that, though.

It was like everything was normal one moment, and then flipped upside down the next. Then again, Wilbur had been slightly off for a bit now. His eyes kept searching, his smile seemed forced at points. One moment, they were laughing, joking, giggling...

Then it was like somebody flipped a switch inside Wilbur. Tommy jumped as the older suddenly screamed at him- or...maybe not him per say...- to shut up. He had his hands over his ears, eyes screwed shut as he began to rock.

"W-Wil?"

Wilbur didn't acknowledge him, his eyes suddenly snapping wide, "Fuck- fuck fuck fuck- they're out to get me-!" Tommy jumped as he suddenly slammed his hands down on the steering wheel, and suddenly he was sent back as Wilbur slammed on the gas, "Wilbur stop it!! Wil you're scaring me!!" He screamed, but it was like he was invisible- Wilbur didn't even acknowledge him.

It was all a blur. The passing signs, the trees...

The oncoming wall.

Him screaming at Wilbur before lunging over, struggling for the wheel and the car flipping over.

The crashing, the glass smashing, the...the hospital.

Techno told him he did a good thing, Phil didn't say shit in the hospital other than talking to the doctors and nurses. Tommy had heard the things they said- something about Wilbur taking psychological tests. Something about Schizoaffective Schizophrenia. Phil tried keeping it from him, but Techno had refused to; explained it developed early twenties which, frankly, Wil was in. It made sense. Wilbur had been slowly acting different lately.

Techno said it wasn't Wilbur's fault. That Wil more than likely never meant to hurt him, he just happened to be in the car.

He heard them recommend medication and seeing a potential therapist.

But Wilbur was back living with them after a few months, and they weren't allowed to mention his

condition. Phil told them about the Anti-depressants Wilbur had to take and not to mess with them. Phil forbade Wilbur from picking Tommy up after that.

So now, it was only Phil and Techno who picked him up.

They stopped at a gas station on the way home, Techno stating he needed some gas and slipping him ten dollars to grab some candy if he wanted. Tommy went in and grabbed a coke almost immediately before going to the candy isle and grabbing two bags of gummy bears. He turned to leave only to jump as he bumped into someone.

"Ah- sorry!" The other person blurted, and he stepped back, eyes narrowing as he looked up a bit at them, snipping, "Watch it!"

Looking at them, he realized it was a guy around his age, with fluffy hair that was dyed half black and half white, wearing a suit and tie with fbi-looking sunglasses clipped to his pocket.

Meeting his eyes, he was stunned to find them a pretty greyish-blue.

In fact, the entire boy was really pretty- handsome even.

...

"You'd make a pretty corpse."

He blurted it out plainly, and the guy's eyes widened a bit. He snorted, chuckling, "Was...that supposed to be a threat?"

"No?" Tommy tilted his head in slight confusion, "Why would it be a fuckin' threat? It's a compliment."

The guy blinked a few times, the gears whirring in his head until he began chuckling in a slightly nervous but amused tone, "That's a...really strange compliment, but thank you?" He held out his hand for Tommy to shake, "I'm Ranboo."

"Tommy!"

He shook Ranboos hand, "You don't look like you're from around here."

"Well, that's because I'm not. Just visiting with my mom." Tommy nodded, staring for a second. He wondered briefly if that pale skin could get any paler. After a bit of awkward silence, Ranboo continued, "And...I'm guessing you're a local?"

Tommys eyes widened and he nodded, "Oh-! Yea-"

"Maybe you could...oh I dunno...show me around sometime? Give me a tour around town?" Tommy blinked owlishly as the taller boy attempted to hint, motioning with his hands. Sighing with a snicker, Ranboo gave in, "Your...what, eighteen? Nineteen?"

"Eighteen, yea."

"Cool, do you wanna be friends."

He paused.

His mind short circuited.

An ear splitting grin broke across his face as he shouted, "You want to be friends?!"

Ranboo winced, looking to see his mother looking at him with an amused, raised brow before snorting, letting out a laugh that was akin to a cackle, "Y-yes?"

"Holy fuck yes- yes yes yes!!" Ranboo stifled his laughter behind his hand, scrambling to take out his phone and unlock it. The excitement of the younger boy was infectious as they exchanged phone numbers, and briefly Ranboo wondered if Tommy had ever had a friend before if he was *this* excited. It was childish and- although seemed a bit immature- was cute in a way.

"Boo?" His mother called from the counter, and Ranboo was quick to say his goodbyes as they checked out and left. As Tommy paid for his own items, the word kept ringing in his skull- "Friend". Ranboo wanted to be his friend. He wanted to hang out-

"Techno I made a friend!!!" He practically screamed as he ran out into the parking area, making the older boy wince as he put away the gas pump, before looking at him as if he'd just said a nuke was dropping, "You...what?"

"I made a friend!! His name is Ranboo and he's visiting town and we exchanged numbers!"

Techno blinked, the gears in his head turning as he slowly processed the younger's words, "You made...a *friend* ..."

"Mhm!"

"That you didn't threaten...?"

"Yea!!"

The older boy stopped. He seemed to be having gears turning in his head slowly, and a slow smile spread across his face. He reached up, ruffling his hair, "Good job, kid. Proud of ya."

Tommy *beamed*.

Techno gestured for him to get in the car and Tommy did, practically bouncing in his seat. He turned on his phone and looked at the number, just a quick double check to make sure it was real- and of course, it still sat there.

'Ranboo'

Gripping the phone tightly, he resisted the urge to send a text now, opting to try and ask Tubbo about it later. Tubbo might be better at the friend thing than him, after all.

God, he couldn't wait.

=x=

Quackity had slept over at Karl's and George's that night. Neither of them mentioned to him what had happened in the kitchen, and he never brought up the bandage around George's hand- and it was as simple as that.

The next day, they offered to let him come with them to turn in their reports, and he had accepted. They had basically chatted the entire way to the press, and when they finally got in the building, Karl split off from them, going to turn in the article. George began showing him around quickly, eventually going back to the computer room.

"This is where we write if one of our regular computers is broken- sucks though since the tech geeks like hanging out here in their freetime-"

"Damn, rude." Quackity jumped at the sudden voice, a sudden arm slinging over George's shoulder that slightly skewed his sunglasses. Looking, Quackity could see it was a man around their age with black hair, dark eyes and tan skin with a bit of facial hair. He wore a white bandanna and black and white hoodie with jeans, and had a slightly smug smirk on his face. George squawked, shooting the other man a dirty look, "What did I say about sneaking up on me?"

"Not too. But it's funny anyway."

George shoved the other man away with a huff, beginning with an irritated sigh, "Fantastic. Quackity, this is Sapnap. Sapnap, this is-" Sapnap's eyes turned to him and suddenly lit up, a grin worming its way on his face as he interrupted, "A whole-ass ten out of ten, hello hottie!"

Quackity choked, his face instantly burning red as he sputtered with an unsteady laugh, "T-Thank you?!"

"Shit, are you single? Please say you are single-"

"W-well yes, but uh-"

"Back off, asshole," George slapped the back of Sapnap's head in annoyance, "Karl already called dibs."

Sapnap pouted, "Aww no fair..."

George opened his mouth to say something only for his breath to hitch, jumping away from something with a scream. The person behind him wheezed, cackling as George turned and punched him in the arm, "Again with the fucking scaring me! I swear, you two make me fucking despise your existences!"

"How sweet of you, Gogy~" The guy teased. He wore a green hoodie, black jeans and a black strap across with black fingerless gloves. He had dirty blond hair with nice green eyes, and he had a lazy, laid back sort of smile. He waved to Quackity, nodding, "Dream."

Dream...

Why did that name ring familiar...?

Quackity brushed it off as George huffed, his face slightly red as he crossed his arms and looked at Quackity again with clear annoyance in the other two, "Dream is our main tech guy and basically our fact checker for articles, and Sapnap here is part of the maintenance staff." He explained shortly.

"Sappy!!" There was a yell from Karl before he suddenly barreled over, hugging the slightly taller man tightly. He seemed a lot happier to see them than George did, and Sapnap smiled right back, ruffling Karl's hair, "Karl fuckin' Jacobs! You called dibs on a random hottie without me!"

Karl looked at him owlishly before seeming to realize, his face turning red as he laughed. Quackity felt his face burning at that, but snickered softly.

He heard whispers and looked over his shoulder subtly, seeing that Dream had pulled George away and the two were seemingly arguing about something. He looked away before either could notice and stuck to Sapnap and Karl's conversation, and before long George was at his side again, looking even more annoyed than before.

"Karl, did you get the article approved?" Quackity flinched, George's tone sounding sharp. It was easy to tell that something in the argument had shortened his fuse significantly, but when Dream came back into view he looked entirely unbothered if not the tiniest bit annoyed.

Karl seemed to notice too, because he winced and looked at George with concern, "Ah...Yeah. They're gonna type it up and print it with the next batch."

"Fantastic!" He grabbed Quackity's arm and Karl's hand before making a bee-line for the exit,

"Then let's go, we've got lots of work to do! More stories to try and find!" Karl sputtered as he and Quackity followed confused, calling back to Sapnap and Dream that it was nice talking before George pulled them out of sight.

As they neared the front doors, George let go and sped out out the front door, and Quackity and Karl looked at eachother with concern. Following him out, they found him pacing by the car, mumbling to himself.

"George?" Karl spoke up first, walking over and stopping the older man, "Are you okay?"

George looked up at him, staring for a second before taking a needed breath and nodding, "Yea, just..." He let out a breath, "Really, *really* don't like being around those two."

"But they're nice-"

"Yea, to *you*. " He bit back before seeming to regret it, "I-I'm sorry Karl just- I can deal with Sapnap, but Dream just...makes me *really* uncomfortable. You know how I am with him." Karl seemed to nod solemnly and that's when George noticed Quackity again, "Sorry about that..."

Quackity shrugged it off, "Your fine. Just give me a heads up next time."

"Will do."

They got in the car and started driving again as the mood slowly began to lighten. However, in the back of his mind, Quackity noted down Dream's name, reminding himself to think more about it later.

Something deep down told him that might be important.

Similarities, Fears, & Possession.

Chapter Notes

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<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

This is a long one y'all, please enjoy <3

TW for descriptions of gore, mention of opioids, blackmail via threats of death to loved ones, and talk of being stalked- all that fucked up stuff as usual.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tubbo tries to keep track of how long he's been here. He thinks it's been maybe four days- knows he was taken on Friday and that now it's the next Monday...

He'd mentioned it over and over again, but this was rather uneventful for a kidnapping. He'd always read stories about this stuff- mostly fiction, but still- and it had always been full of more...torture and gross stuff.

But as he'd told himself before, he should be thankful for that.

However, this was the weirdest it had gotten- because what Tommy was asking him was how to text a friend while mixing some weird stuff.

"I mean, he sent me a meme, that means we're on good terms, right?"

It was like listening to a teenage girl fret about every text from a guy she liked- but more murder based. Pretty cliché and ironic if you think about it.

"Do you think he likes chemistry?"

"I don't know. You met him, not me."

"True...should I ask him?"

"Sure?" Tubbo sighed, "Look Tommy, I don't think you realize this- which is odd since you seem to have stalked me for *years* ..." Tubbo had a bad taste in his mouth from how easily he stated that, "But uh...I'm kind of socially awkward...? An introvert if you want a label for it. So I just...don't know about this stuff really? Or- I'm just really bad at it..."

"So am I." Tommy stated plainly. He emptied something that looked worryingly like a prescription pain medication onto the table, grabbing one along with a bottle of water. "People don't really like how blunt I am- they're all pussies who get freaked out easily." He walked over to Wilbur's torture chamber and nudged Schlatt awake. Tubbo stared at the little pill in Tommy's hand before turning and picking up the bottle, gut twisting in worry as he read the label.

OxyContin.

"Tommy...what..." He looked as Tommy carefully had Schlatt open his mouth and dropped the pill in before uncapping the water and making him swallow. Tommy looked at Tubbo with a raised brow, "What? Just pain killers."

"It's OxyContin. Highly addictive if I remember correctly..."

Tommy rolled his eyes and put down the water bottle by Schlatt before undoing the straps around his wrists and ankles, "Relax, it's Bad's orders, and he'd never let Schlatt get addicted to something. They're strong, so he only gives him it once every two or so days and only when he *really* needs it. But since Bad is gone, I've gotta care for him. Mind putting the other stuff back in the bottle?" Tubbo turned back to the bench and gathered the pills in the bottle, recapping it. He looked to the shelf that Tommy took them from and put it up again.

Tommy helped Schlatt up and brought him to the couch, the older man cursing up a storm as he limped there. As soon as he got there he sat and extended his leg to prop it up on the table. Tommy went to grab the surgical supplies, taking out the scissors and slowly beginning to snip off the dirty bandages.

He carefully peeled back the bandages, revealing the bloody stitched up bolt hole underneath. Tommy seemed unbothered by the sight, and instead took out a clean wipe and rubbing alcohol, pouring it slowly on the wound. Schlatt grunted, hissing as foam and bubbles formed over the wound, signifying the dying germs. Tommy wiped it off carefully and grabbed new, clean, bandage wrap, tightly winding it around the thigh before cutting it off and putting everything away. He grabbed a shackle from under the couch and carefully locked it around Schlatt's ankle before getting up, walking to the sink and washing his hands- then, he took Tubbo's hand and pulled him back upstairs, the previous subjects seeming completely dropped.

When he looks out the window, he can see night falling.

Tubbo follows the other boy to his room once again, and Tommy locks the door behind them before walking to the trunk and opening it. He's surprised to watch as Tommy takes out the family album again, flipping to a page and then looking at Tubbo. Tommy doesn't say anything- just squints and looks from Tubbo to the book, nose scrunching up.

"You...know the other day, I was thinking of something and...I was right." Tommy blurted suddenly, "You really do look like her."

Tubbo became confused. His words were a sharp mood shift- a far cry from what they had been talking about earlier, "What?"

"My mom." He turned the book to show Tubbo a picture of...what was her name, Samantha? He couldn't remember. "You look a lot like her. Same hair and eyes, same face- kinda weird."

He...

"What?" Tubbo took the book and looked closely at the picture as Tommy continued, "And before you wonder, no; according to your family tree and stuff you're not related. It just seems to be a weird coincidence that I didn't notice until you dyed your hair." His tone was all too casual for someone that had just admitted his "best friend" looked like his dead mother, but at this point, Tubbo had figured that was just how Tommy was. Casual about the most horrific to the most strange things.

The worst part, Tubbo thought, was exactly how right Tommy was. They shared the same button nose, the same vulnerable ice blue doe eyes, same soft looking round face, bow shaped lips- the shade of brown in his hair was just a bit lighter and all he was really missing was missing a beauty mark just under his left eye. The similarity was uncanny...

And it scared the *shit* out of Tubbo.

He shaky handed the album back to Tommy and, unbothered, he took it and put it back in the trunk, not really questioning Tubbo's trembling as he did. Not bringing it up again, Tommy began getting ready for bed as he put things away, "Tomorrow I have some tests I need to run after school. I have a new formula I wanna test." He stated, and Tubbo nodded numbly, mind still stuck on those unusual similarities as he stared at the carpet.

Knowledge of these similarities sent a new type of fear through him as he could almost feel his chances of getting out alive pretty much plummet, making him almost sick on the spot.

Things had just gotten ten times as hard for him.

=x=

“What the fuck?!” was all that left Quackity as Karl pulled up to the driveway of his house. Karl cringed, eyes wide with as much shock as Quackity, “The honk...?”

Quackity opened the car door and got out, walking over to his car hurriedly, a deep sense of dread and anger filling him as he took in all the damage. Three of his four tires were slashed, the passenger and rear windows were smashed, and it had been keyed to hell and back. Turning to the house, he was speechless as he surveyed the damage to just the front. It was egged, the front door was open wide, most of the windows looked like they had rocks chucked at them, the little garden of rose bushes that Bad had grown was torn up and stomped on, and there was splashes of a sticky looking dark red substance all over the driveway and seemingly thrown at the walls- And to top it all off, strewn about in the branches of a large dying tree at the front were what looked like fucking *intestines*. All bloody and hung up like some gorey, macabre christmas strings- and the sight made him queasy as he could only hope that they were merely animal organs.

“I was only gone for almost forty eight hours! Por qué carajo alguien haría esto?!” He tore off his beanie as he ran his fingers through his hair; unable to do much other than stand there in stunned silence, gawking.

Karl stopped the car and him and George got out, walking over as they took it all in as well. George spoke first, voice in disbelief, “Jesus christ...who the fuck did you piss off?” Quackity’s brow furrowed as he tried to wrack his mind for an answer, but came up blank. “I-I don’t know! Like I told you, I’m new around town- you guys are the first people aside from Sam, Minx, and Traves that I’ve actually really talked to...”

Karl put a hand on his back, giving a nervous, shaky smile, “Well- I’m at least really glad now that you stayed over last night...I can’t imagine having been in there while this was happening...” Quackity nodded slightly, swallowing dryly, “Shit I...fuck I need to rent a hotel or some shit now- fuck fuck fuck- Hijo de puta...” He muttered under his breath before ice shot through him, realization hitting him like lightening, “Oh *fuck me* - Bad and Skeppy’s documents-” He looked to where the window of the bedroom was, slightly less scared upon seeing it intact. He turned to the other two urgently, “Please- I need to see if the documents are okay but I can’t go in alone-” Karl and George looked at each other nervously before nodding, “Yea- sure-” The three headed inside, Quackity in the lead as he whispered, “Remember, do *not* touch anything. This is technically a crime scene, and the fact that we are going in without fuckin’ alerting the cops or something before hand is bad enough...”

He took in his surroundings cautiously, watching where he was stepping. The floors, walls, and furniture were all splattered with that red stuff, the couch looked like it had been torn at with a knife, and the few flower pots and pictures around the house were knocked down or thrown,

leaving their shattered remains on the floor. The air was heavy and smelt of iron and rotting eggs. Quackity wasted no time going upstairs, a sense of paranoia hanging over him as he made his way to the bedroom door. He heard someone unlock their phone and suddenly a light shined past him into the darkening hall. Looking back, he could see it was George using his phone's flashlight, the brunette looking completely on edge as he gave a shaky thumbs-up. Quackity looked at him appreciatively, and he heard a whimper followed by a brush of skin against his.

Instinctively, he reached out and grabbed the hand, interlacing his fingers with them and giving a gentle squeeze for comfort as he recognized it was Karl. Moving forward, it was only a few seconds later that they finally found the room. Seeing the door open only a crack, Quackity looked to Karl and George questioningly before slowly pushing the door open with his elbow as to not leave fingerprints- finally gawking at the state of the room.

It was completely ransacked- his clothes and items thrown about, random papers everywhere while even more of that red stuff was dumped on his clothes and bed. However, when Quackity saw that the wall decorations were mostly undisturbed, he felt relief wash over him. Never before had he been so thankful for Bad's constant insistence to keep important things under lock and key and his own gut instincts as he walked over to one of the posters- a dumb, large ICarly poster that was a joke gift from Skeppy on his birthday. He let go of Karl's hand and grabbed the loose corner, carefully peeling it down to reveal a sleek looking black wall safe.

Quackity blocked Karl and George's vision before punching in the number code, the soft beep sounding startlingly loud in the mostly silent room. Quackity opened it, further relief flooding through him as everything inside was accounted for- wads of cash, his good luck charm, a flash drive, and most importantly the thick beige folder of all the evidence both Bad and Skeppy had gathered before him, "Looks like God is at least a little bit on my side..." He jokingly muttered, gathering everything in his arms. He stuffed the flash drive and charm in his pockets, holding the wads of cash and the folder in his arms securely before quietly shutting the safe.

Just as he turned, he nearly had a heart attack as George's phone pinged loudly and the brunette let out a shrill short scream in surprise before slapping a hand over his mouth. Quackity and Karl simultaneously shot him a look of annoyance, all three of their hearts pumping at the sudden scare as George gave them an apologetic, guilty look, before scowling at his phone. Brushing it off, they headed back where they came, the walk back easier. They reached the outside and immediately made a mad dash back to the car, all three of them climbing in- George in the back and the other two in the front- and taking deep breaths that they hadn't known they were holding in.

"Fuck I'm- I'm really sorry I screamed guys, i'm horrible in situations like those and I forgot to put my phone on silent-" George fumbled over an apology and Quackity huffed, waving it off, "It's fine, you couldn't have known...I'm just ecstatic that whoever fucked up my place couldn't find the safe."

"Lucky you I guess." Karl chuckled breathlessly, the tense air from before finally disbanding. After a few moments, Quackity took out his phone and opened the internet, sighing, "Alright, time to find myself a hotel room, then call the police..." Karl and George looked at each other again before offering, "You can bunk on our couch if you'd like? It's one of those pull-out sofas, and we

can try and help some more with the investigation!”

Quackity flushed, giving them a small smile, “Seriously guys, I hate to intrude and stuff- we literally only met yesterday...”

“You won’t be! Plus, you don’t really have a car, nor any clean clothes judging by your room...we don’t mind.”

He thought for a second before chewing at his bottom lip, hesitant, “You sure...?”

“Positive.” Karl’s smile broadened, and Quackity found himself smiling just as wide thanks to the other man’s infectious attitude, “Well, if you insist...”

Karl cheered as George flopped back giving a lazy half smile, the car starting as they began pulling out and driving. As Karl put on some music, he chatted with Quackity, all the while George sat silent in the back, forehead pressed to the window as his eyes were locked on his phone screen, their words drowned out as he was lost in thought.

His teeth busied themselves with his bottom lip, smile non-existent as he stared at the unchecked notification. Anxiety clawed at his gut, the cut on his hand throbbing in pain, and his energy feeling drained just from looking at it. He wanted to swipe it away. To ignore it and pretend it didn’t exist and move on with his life- but the problem wasn’t that he wasn’t strong enough to or just couldn’t ignore it for the life of him.

It was that he had already done that, and that had almost gotten his baby sister killed. He had tested his luck in the beginning. Blocked and ignored every single call and text. He was warned by the guy not to. George hadn’t believed him when he first threatened his family, but it took one photo of his little sister playing at school for him to suddenly realize that this bastard was real.

He hadn’t had the will to ignore the guy since. Tried fighting back, tried pleading, tried everything to get him to leave him alone- but in the end the asshole seemed to have a noose tied around his neck and was determined not to let him go.

[Two new snapchats from N1GHTM@R3]

Taking a shaky breath, he finally mustered up enough courage to click it and unlocked his phone. The first photo opened, showing a nice view of the moon rising over the calm, dark ocean, and a starlit sky. The caption was simple and oddly normal.

This is my favorite place to relax. I want to take you here someday. :)

George's nose scrunched up and he forced himself to flip to the next one. This time, it was a video, and George plugged in earbuds as he played it. There was the sound of waves rolling and crashing below, and slowly the camera panned down from the beautiful view to show the deadly truth of where he was standing- right at the edge of a steep cliff, the waves crashing against the rocks. There was a deep chuckle, voice just loud enough to hear above the waves as his words were a purr, *"Though I'll admit...if you stood here with me, I don't think you'd have a second thought about pushing me to my demise, would you?"* Goosebumps climbed up George's spine as he could hear glimmers of joy in the guy's voice as he stated that. There was an almost lovestruck sigh and the man laughed softly, *"Though that would be quite the gamble, considering that the height is a threshold. Depending on how or where in the water I'd land, I could very well survive and you wouldn't know...but god it would be hot to see you **try**..."*

George closed the video and hurriedly typed his response, jaw clenched.

GeorgeNF (8:46 pm): Sick fuck.

He turned off his phone and brought his knees to his chest, the man's voice ringing in his head, *"I don't think you'd have a second thought about pushing me to my demise, would you?"*

He hated that. He fucking *despised* it, because it was an undeniable truth he didn't want to admit. When it came down to it, would he take a chance at killing another human being just to be free of this torture?

He hated the fact that his mind screamed yes. He wasn't a killer- he wouldn't stoop to be that low and despicable in his life.

But when it came down to watching that video again, and again, and again all while fantasizing about finally being rid of that bastard, guilt filled his gut, stomach turning as his eyes stung with tears.

Maybe he already was that despicable.

=x=

"Techno~ I've got you a new doll!!!" His kidnapper's voice was loud, and Bad was silent as heavy footsteps grew closer. He didn't try to run, the man's arm around his shoulders and holding him there. His hands were tied in front of him- the rope rubbing his wrists raw and the blindfold covering his eyes was slightly damp from his tears.

*"Another, Phil? Already?" A heavily accented voice spoke, something that Bad could only guess was scottish, "Yes? Do you have a problem with that, my raven?" A hypothetical question in the form of a taunting purr. Phil's voice was dripping in honey and laced with mocking sarcasm. Bad focused on the word choice- "**another** ." Whoever kidnapped him not only had done this multiple times before, but he had no problem with it and seemed to be in charge.*

"N-no! Of course not it's- it's just that- well, you just gave Techno a new doll less than...what, a week ago?" The other man seemingly hesitated a bit, voice growing softer, "Does he really need another so soon?"

"Of course~! You know how Techno is with them- he's just a bit too rough, that's all~" Phil chuckled as if it was some funny joke while Bad paled, his trembling increasing.

'Too rough?' he thought to himself, fear sinking in further. What did "too rough" entail?

The arm dropped from around his shoulders as silence took precedence in the room. Bad nearly moved before he felt fingertips brush just under the blindfold, making him nearly jump out of his skin. Fearful, he jumped back and whimpered, scrambling backward. There was a grunt of irritation as heavy footsteps followed, someone guaffawing in surprise as he tried to get away- shaking his head. He didn't make it far before suddenly he was grabbed and he cried out for them to let him go. Now there were two people in the room snickering- neither near to him. He yanked hard and suddenly his feet slipped from under him- tumbling to the ground with the person following. His groan of pain was cut short by a terrified yelp as the person's hand slammed down inches from his face when they caught themselves from against landing on him. There was a growl in annoyance from the person above him as he froze, "Stay. Fucking. Still."

Bad whimpered as he felt their breath on his face, voice low and words clearly meant to be a threat. The fingers touched his face again, hooking around the blindfold and pulling it off with a few hard tugs.

The sudden light blinded him for a few seconds- wincing and blinking quickly. When he finally got used to the light, his eyes snapped open as they met the person above him. His hair was a dusky pinkish color and his skin a lightly tanned peach- his eyes a deep chestnut brown that reflected a blood red color and his face twisted in annoyed sneer.

The moment their eyes met though, the annoyance was replaced with surprise.

Bad woke in a cold sweat, gripping the bed sheets so hard that they felt like they might tear. He could hear Phil's soft snoring behind him, conscious of the hand on his hip burning him and the thundering of his own heart in his chest. He hated that nightmare- the one that took him back to the day where it all began.

Where his life had ended and his hell had begun- right on the center of that family room floor, terrified and trembling...

Feeling pressure on his bladder, he moved to get up and walked to the bathroom. He used the toilet and moved to the sink, washing his hands before looking at himself in the mirror and frowning as he spotted a few more strands of white and grey hairs. It felt sad knowing he was only just in his twenties, but was under so much fear and stress that his hair was greying already. Looking into the bedroom, his eyes locked on the bedroom door- flickering between it and Phil's sleeping form.

But the thought was short-lived as Phil grunted and shifted in the bed, briefly waking up but eyes still shut.

He sighed and went back to the bed, crawling in reluctantly. As soon as he laid down, he felt Phil's arm loop around his midsection and pulled him slightly closer with a lazy, tired drawl, "That's a good dove..."

He didn't respond, simply grateful he'd made the right call. Just another one of Phil's millions of tests of loyalty, and Bad hated that he'd been here long enough to know every single one. Trying to ignore the person holding him, Bad took a breath and shut his eyes, forcing himself to drift to sleep again.

=x=

Techno stared at the ceiling as he reminisced, fingers tapping on his stomach rhythmically as he was unable to sleep for the second day in a row now. Sleeping felt impossible without Bad by him.

The moment their eyes met though, the annoyance was replaced with surprise.

Techno could have melted then and there. The victim's eyes were a green that was so vivid and cat-like that they seemed to glow in the dim room and pierce right through any sliver of a soul he had left. He was frozen with fear under Techno- no doubt having his fight or flight instincts trying to kick in- with wide doe eyes shiny with tears staring at him in terror past thick black lashes. Soft-looking lips were a light shade of pink and freckles were splattered all across his cheeks and nose, skin a fair tone matching with hair as black as ivory.

In a simple sense: He was beautiful, and that didn't make sense.

Moments ago he was so ready to take this next "doll" to the basement and start by bashing his legs so he couldn't run. But now, that felt uncharacteristically easy. Which was also odd- because Techno liked things to be easy. When they weren't, they frustrated him- and that made everything worse. That made him even more violent.

Then he caught it. That little glimmer in the victim's eyes.

Innocence .

Not the kind that didn't know what sex was or that you could die in horrible ways or naive to reality- but the kind that was pure and sweet. An innocence that was born simply because by some rarity the person lived their entire life with clean hands- never committed a crime or had anything other than good intentions towards another person. The victim's eyes were full of an innocent fear, wondering why this was happening to them and what they did to deserve this.

*Because he was **good** .*

*Wholeheartedly, purely, fully **good** .*

This victim had a trait so predominantly there and on top of that was such an utter rarity- and his father was giving him to him. Techno felt a smirk tug at his lips, eyes lidded as he fantasized what he could do with something like that. The many ways he could destroy it. He felt like the son of Satan being given one of God's angels, chest swelled with pride at that. Techno never believed in any higher beings before, but he knew if there was a God that existed- with sinless angels in the sky, pure and sweet- then this surely had to be one of his angels. One that the old man in the sky turned a blind eye to for just a moment only to have them snared in the claws of a filthy sinful demon, and dragged to the fiery pits of hell.

*This was his doll- no. This was his **angel** .*

This was going to be his special little angel. This one, Techno decided, he was going to keep forever to slowly corrupt and make fall from his grace...

Until he knows nothing but warmth in his arms, and the fire and brimstone of hell that await him if he tries to run.

A small smile crept its way across Techno's face.

He'd get Bad back eventually, he just needed to wait- and once he did get Bad back...

He refused to let him be taken away from him again.

Chapter End Notes

I would like to mention that I do in fact like hearing from y'all in the comments or the in chapter discussion of discord. Positive feedback and constructive criticism do actually help a lot as well as give me motivation. Thanksy <3

The Trinity of One Broken Man.

Chapter Notes

Forgive me for this being a bit shorter than usual, the past few weeks have been highly stressful with a lot happening, but I thank y'all for all your kind words as they helped a lot. That being said, please enjoy this chapter!

I have a category in my server dedicated to this fic, so come on in! I'd love to meet y'all and hear feedback, plus you get notifications about new chapters the moment it's updated!

<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

TW for Stockholm syndrome!!!

Tuesday, Tubbo is left home alone again. He counts the windows again, jimmies them a bit to see which are loose and which were tight, eats the breakfast and lunch Phil prepares, and then is faced with something he doesn't fully understand how the fuck happened in the first place.

He was directly told to avoid Wilbur, yet here he was sitting in the guy's lap playing the laziest and fearfully competitive and silent game of Mario Kart ever- and that isn't even a euphemism. Silently, he recounts to himself; is this weird and kinda creepy? Yes. Because he's an eighteen year old boy sitting in another grown man's lap as if it's the most casual thing ever.

But to be fair, there was a proper reason for this; and it's the other problem he had. Originally, Wilbur had propped his legs up on the middle part of the couch while leaning on the arm, and Tubbo sat on the end. Then eventually, Techno, seemingly *also* bored, joined in, and Tubbo was forced to get up. Wilbur didn't want to move his legs, joked about letting Tubbo sit in his lap, and Tubbo- now becoming all too comfortable around literal serial killers- had decided to take him up on it instead of sitting on the floor like a normal person.

So now, there was an air of awkwardness in the room while they played, and Tubbo was trying his hardest not to move a single muscle out of fear of making things take a turn for the worse.

How did getting kidnapped by serial killers turn into *this* for him?

Honestly, Techno and Wilbur didn't... *seem* so bad. Aside from him literally witnessing Wilbur gouge out a man's eyes and discuss black market deals- they seemed like pretty normal people....

What the fuck was he even saying anymore? Was Stockholm syndrome already kicking in after a few days? Jesus..

The quiet is broken when Techno checks his phone and gets up, setting his controller down, "If

dad asks, I'm picking up Tommy and then me and him are gonna make a special trip. We'll be back before dinner." He turned and narrowed his eyes on Wilbur, "Don't pull any of your fucking stunts while I'm gone."

Wilbur scoffed behind Tubbo, huffing and waving him off, "Yea yea, now piss off..." He grumbled. The older man gave a cautionary glance to Tubbo before grabbing his keys and heading out the door, leaving them alone again in awkward silence.

There's a soft sigh behind him before Wilbur speaks again, "We've been playing this for hours, how about some TV or some shit?" Tubbo doesn't get the chance to reply before Wilbur reaches past him and grabs the remote, changing the screen to display the regular television, starting to flip through the channels. He contemplates getting up and moving to the now empty spot on the couch, eyeing it warily, but stays frozen in place out of fear. Minutes feel like an eternity before he stops on a random nature channel and huffs, "Okay, seriously, if you're gonna stay there then lets at least get a bit more comfortable."

Again, Tubbo doesn't get the chance to protest before Wilbur's practically picking him up like he's weighless and shifting around. When he plops Tubbo back down, he's sitting straight up and his long arms wrap around his waist, pulling him so that his back meets Wilbur's stomach, before finally he feels the taller man slump over and rest his chin on top of his head lazily.

"There." There was something in his voice that sounded satisfied, "Much more comfortable."

"U-uh...yea..."

Tubbo's stomach twisted, wishing he had gotten up before. If he had felt trapped before, now he was physically caged in with no escape. While admittedly more comfortable, it felt sickeningly intimate and the feeling of Wilbur's arms wrapped around him like he was a stuffed animal or a doll made his skin crawl. He tries his best to focus on the TV, and before he knows it his focus is broken by Wilbur grumbling, "God, ugly little fuckers."

Looking up, he can see Wilbur is staring at the TV, and looking to the screen he can see it's something about anteaters. He raises a brow in slight confusion, "What, do you have something against anteaters?"

"Is it not obvious?" Wilbur cranes his neck to look at him, "They're fucking *horrible*."

"How so?"

"Oh don't even get me *started!*" Wilbur dramatically flops back and throws his arms up. Previous fear forgotten and now free, Tubbo turns a bit in his lap to look at Wilbur, listening in amusement as the older man starts rambling, "I have an entire list of reasons as to why these fuckers are terrible! Number one- just look at their fucking faces!!" He gestures to the anteater on the screen, scowling, "Their tails are ridiculous, they're stupidly long- and don't they look like they're walking

backwards?! It's so stupid!" Tubbo squinted and tilted his head, and found himself amused as he could sort of see what Wilbur was talking about, "Well..."

"And they kill *ants*! ANTS! Ants are good, hard workers, and these fuckers just gobble 'em up!! Their coloration reminds me of like- muddy penguins and its gross! And their *tongues* !! Like- you know what I want? I want these little fuckers exterminated! Did you know they can actually fucking kill people with those creepy ass claws?!" The pure vindication in his voice is enough to make Tubbo break into laughter at the ridiculousness of the hatred, and Wilbur couldn't prevent the cheeky grin that broke across his face, "Stop laughing, this is serious!!"

"They're fucking animals!!"

"They're menaces to society!!"

"They don't even-" Tubbo broke off, holding his stomach from laughing so hard as Wilbur wrapped his arms around him again. Had Wilbur not been holding him, he swore he would have tumbled forward off the couch. The air in the room felt lighter and more comfortable as the two shot back and forth, and for the first time since he's gotten there, he takes a real look at Wilbur's face. It's the first time he's seen the man completely sober and the aura he has feels shockingly friendly and warm. His eyes are a deep blue like Phil's, there's a small scar on the left corner of his bottom lip, a slightly darker, long slanted scar just above his jawline, and a scar right around the nap of his neck, only slightly off from being parallel to his ear. His smile is cheeky, there's dark circles under his eyes, and he honestly looked like someone Tubbo wouldn't think twice about when passing on the street, possibly assuming him to be an exhausted college student.

However, the comfort completely ends when there's a knock on the door, "Delivery for Thomas Drystan!" is all that's called. Phil calls out that he'll get it, and then Tubbo realizes that Wilbur's arms get a bit tighter around him and he feels almost every muscle in Wilbur's body tense.

Looking up, Wilbur has completely stopped laughing, expression becoming grim and lips tight as his eyes flickered around the room, "Do you hear that?"

Tubbo's brow furrowed, the air in the room becoming heavy again as he tried to listen but heard nothing but Phil talking to the person at the door, "The...delivery man?" The older man frowned deeply, jaw clenched as he turned white as a sheet, and Tubbo felt like something was really wrong. He could feel Wilbur start to shake and his breathing become more labored. He didn't make a sound as Wilbur squeezed his eyes shut and started to shake his head slowly, muttering under his breath gibberish. For a second, Tubbo considers making a run to the door. The delivery guy would have a car, and if he pulled the guy with him he might be able to make it to the car with him and escape-

The idea was completely snuffed out as Tubbo choked, Wilbur suddenly jumped at the sound of the postman laughing and yanking him in with a loud scream of "No", holding him in a death grip as he trembled violently, one hand going to hold Tubbo's head to his chest, "No- no they- they aren't gonna get in- nonono!" The pure roughness and fear in his voice as he rambles nonsense takes Tubbo by surprise, and like this he can hear the thundering of his heartbeat.

“Wilbur, settle down in there!” Is all Phil yells, before going back to chatting with the postman. The way Wilbur is gripping him is uncomfortable and bordering on painful, but he makes no movements against it, feeling that might just make this worse.

Wilbur’s practically crowding him as he’s looking around wildly, and it’s almost like he can see or hear something that Tubbo’s entirely unaware of. Eventually, he says something that finally makes a bit of sense, “I-I need to show you something- it’s- m-my room is safe- safe safe safe- completely safe-”

“Okay.” Tubbo manages, trying to remain as calm as possible, “We’ll- we’ll go to your room, okay? But you need to let me go first.” Wilbur hesitates for a moment, before shakily nodding, looking around still as he slowly lets go. Tubbo moves slowly, stumbling a bit as he stands, and as Wilbur stands up as well, his hand grips Tubbo’s wrist tightly with trembling hands. Hearing Phil shut the door, he lets the taller one quickly lead him around, and soon enough they’re upstairs and Wilbur practically ducks into his room. He struggles to flip on the light and hastily shuts the door behind them. He lets go of Tubbo and rushes to the other side of the room to peek through the curtains.

Looking around, Wilbur’s room is a mess. The paint on the walls is chipped in lots of areas, the bed is unmade, there’s several mugs on the nightstand, a pile of clothes building up by an already overflowing hamper, a trash by the desk overflowing with crumpled and ripped up papers, broken pencils and pens, and tissues, and an old, but clean looking monitor similar to what’s in Tommy’s room. The setup is pretty cluttered, and beside the computer is what looks to be a standing recording mic that’s plugged in. The surface of the desk has all sorts of scratches, and a bunch of ripped out notebook papers under a thick and worn looking notebook. There’s a small cork board just above the desk, and all sorts of promotional posters and fliers for various conventions, concerts, and musical theatre performances.

On the dresser, the mirror is covered up and has lots of little framed pictures. There is one of Wilbur hoisting Tommy on his shoulders while the younger is holding up a bass with the biggest smile, another with Wilbur on what looks like a school stage, dressed up. Another shows Wilbur, Techno, Schlatt, and two other boys being around 8 to 10 years old with even younger Tommy, all of them dressed up for halloween. In every single one, Wilbur looks so entirely different, completely carefree and enthusiastic.

Three acoustic guitars sat in stands against the far wall, and at the size of them he could guess only the largest was used now, as the other two looked to be from when Wilbur was smaller and younger. In the closet, he can see a few semi-large boxes inside, and the clothes are disorganized and most pretty dull in color. On an empty wall across the bed, there hung a large curtain that covered the wall behind it.

The most interesting though was the lack of a lock on his door and the lack of a door completely for his bathroom.

Hearing a thud, he looked to see Wilbur now pacing, and he spoke up, “So...are you going to tell

me what's going-”

“Is it not obvious?” Wilbur’s head snapped to him, eyes narrowed as Tubbo was supposed to know what was going on, but not even waiting for an answer yet again before moving to the curtain on the wall and opening it up.

What Tubbo sees makes him suddenly feel like he’s in a tv show. The wall is covered with all sorts of pictures, written papers, newspaper articles, and more- had this been any other situation, Tubbo would have laughed at the sheer ridiculousness of it. There’s pictures of all sorts stuff alike to UFO’s, the printed articles having all sorts of titles that were obvious conspiracy theories, and a branch of it had a picture of some delivery guy with stupid pictures of aliens and lizard people tacked around it.

Without prompting, Wilbur begins ranting and raving about it all, but Tubbo can barely process the leaps and bounds his mind had to have made to reach his conclusions. He mostly takes in Wilbur’s behavior and movements. Each movement is stiff, shaky, and displaying clear distress and irritation, he’s slightly hunched, he’s constantly on the movement. Barely any of his sentences are cohesive, sometimes backtracking, rebounding, as if on a merry-go-round- The one thing he understands is that Wilbur thinks there's someone or something after him because he knows too much- and Tubbo can tell by his voice he truly believes every word of what he’s explained. This isn’t an act.

By the time he finishes, Tubbo is in stunned silence as Wilbur approached him, “I-I know- you- you probably think I’m insane- a wack job and all that sit but you’ve got to believe me, I’m not lying I promise-” Wilbur grabs him by his shoulders, getting on his knees and looking at him with desperate eyes, looking practically like he’s pleading, “The rest of my family thinks I’m nuts- you know? But I promise, I’m the *sanest* person here-” Tubbo can’t help but feel genuinely bad for him. There’s suddenly three different sides he’s seeing to one man, and each one is not even close to alike to the other. One is terrifying, a murderer with no remorse. Another is a human being like him, someone he wouldn’t think twice about when passing.

But the third is pitiful. He can’t bring himself to be scared of the desperate, obviously broken minded individual pleading to be believed. Someone who needed obvious mental help.

Pitying him, he nodded slowly with a shaky smile, “I believe you.”

Wilbur went rigid, eyes starting to become glassy as he stared in pure shock, “You...y-you do?” “Mhm. You...have pretty convincing evidence.” Tubbo managed, practically lying through his teeth. Wilbur stared for a few heartbeats before suddenly beginning to crumble, tears falling as he wrapped his arms around Tubbo and pulling him into a tight hug as he blabbered thank yous. He hunched over and buried his face in Tubbo’s neck, letting out quiet sobs. Tubbo returned the hug loosely, his mind filled with only the idea of how twisted this was. This had to just be the stockholm syndrome; he was feeling bad for the serial killer and *comforting* him.

Internally, he made the decision of whether or not to tell Tommy could wait till later.

=x=

Quackity flipped through the packet quickly, eyes scanning the pages briefly, “And this is all on his profile?”

“Everything I had the clearance to get, yea.”

Quackity read the name at the top again with a deep frown.

Thomas Innit Drystan.

The teen in the picture looked totally unassuming- just a regular kid with a clean file aside from a few detentions. It was hard to believe this kid was a potential suspect. Sam nudged him and Quackity followed him out of the school, letting Sam lock the door behind them, “Thanks again.” “No problem, I told you I'd help if you'd need it.”

The two said their goodbyes, and Quackity went back to the car where Karl was waiting for him. He showed the other man the paper, and Karl smiled before starting the car.

As they left, Sam began walking to his car, the only one left in the empty parking lot as night fell.

Or, at least he thought.

Tests that are unpassable & Nostalgia that is questionable.

Chapter Notes

I have a category in my server dedicated to this fic, so come on in! I'd love to meet y'all and hear feedback, plus you get notifications about new chapters the moment it's updated!

<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

TW for human testing and character death.

As Tommy walks down the dirt path, he hops up the steps and pushes the door open, he's surprised by the sound of chattering upstairs. Techno had shoed him in before, insisting to bring their stuff inside by himself while he got dinner. Tommy was a bit worried for him- their victim was tough to take down, and at one point he'd gotten a good punch to Techno's face, nearly escaping. However, Techno was strong. Once he'd gotten a foot up on the guy, it was over.

He walked further down the hallway, looking into the living room and spotting Phil sitting at the couch.

"Hey dad..."

Phil merely glanced at him with a hum before looking back at the book in his lap, "Hey Toms...did you and Techno get what you were looking for?"

"Mhm..." Tommy trailed off awkwardly, looking around before continuing, "Where's uh...Tubbo?"

"He's with Wil, actually."

Tommy's blood froze. "He's what?!" he screeched, making Phil jump as Tommy sprinted up the stairs and to Wilbur's room, fear filling him. He trusted Techno and his father with Tubbo, but god knows he did not trust Wilbur with him.

It was all a blur. The passing signs, the trees...

The oncoming wall.

Him screaming at Wilbur before lunging over, struggling for the wheel and the car flipping over.

The crashing, the glass smashing, the...the hospital.

Tommy shook away the memory. Wilbur wasn't stable. Maybe Phil didn't acknowledge it, but Tommy wasn't one to remain blissfully ignorant, and while Wilbur was less in danger of hurting Tubbo than he was himself, Tommy didn't like the chances at all.

"Okay, so, this is actually one of my more recent ones-" Tommy slowed down as he heard Wilbur's voice, the calm and serene tone being something Tommy hadn't heard in a long time. He heard Tubbo hum along to something and he crept closer as Tubbo chirped, "Wow- this is fucking cool!" He peeked in the room to see Wilbur sitting at his monitor, Tubbo sitting in his lap with a pair of headphones on. Wilbur caught sight of him and smiled, "Tommy, you're back!" Tubbo looked at him and beamed at him as well, slipping the headphones off, "Hey Toms- why didn't you tell me your brother makes music?"

Tommy came in more, stunned as Wilbur lifted Tubbo off his lap and took the headphones, putting them on the desk and pausing what looked like a recording on the screen before turning to him in his chair. Still confused, Tommy murmured quietly, "I...didn't know he still did that..." It was the truth. As far as Tommy knew, Wilbur had stopped making music since the car crash. Every time he'd seen Wilbur's guitars, they were still gathering dust, untouched and abandoned from lost passion in a sick mind.

Wilbur laughed shakily, putting a hand on Tubbo's shoulder to get his attention, "I...don't really show my music to the rest of my family anymore. It's more a private thing now..." He trailed off. Tubbo mouthed an "ohhhh" while nodding, humming, and Tommy stood there awkwardly.

Eventually, he took a breath and smiled weakly, "Well, actually, this is perfect! I have to conduct my experiment tonight anyway, so Tubs can just stay with you tonight."

Wilbur's eyes immediately lit up again and he had a smile up to his ears, cheering and hooking his arm around Tubbo's neck, "Hell yeah! I can show you all kinds of cool stuff!" Tubbo laughed as Wilbur ruffled his hair, and Tommy faltered, heart aching a bit at the sight. For so long, he'd only seen Wilbur so excited while drunk, and judging from the clarity in his eyes he was clearly sober right now with no signs of even wanting to drink.

Maybe he could trust Wilbur this once- his bonding with Tubbo could be beneficial...

"I'll leave you two be then- but uh- A package should have come with my name, do you know...?"

"Oh- your dad got it." Tubbo said casually.

"Right...alright then, see you." Tommy backed out of the room before turning around and heading to the stairs. He headed to his room and grabbed his tape recorder, a blank cassette, and his camera before running back downstairs. He inquired to Phil about the package, and once again, his father barely glanced at him before gesturing to the kitchen. Tommy went to the kitchen and grabbed the box before heading to the basement, the stairs creaking once more under his weight.

Setting it on his workstation, he turned to see Techno tying his test subject standing up, hanging by his wrists as the man was still unconscious. He put the blank cassette in the tape recorder, put on gloves, and spoke firmly, "You weighed and measured him?"

Techno pulled the straps to make sure they were tight and nodded, "Yep. It's on the paper." "Thanks." Tommy slipped on his gloves and opened up the box, grabbing the bundle of flowers inside. He broke off four stems from the flowers and set the rest down on his workbench, walking over as Techno raised a brow, "What's that?"

"Hemlock. Now," He set the stems down on a sanitized tray sitting on a small rolling table before going back for his recorder, double checking for the purple tape and the *Mellohi* label before walking back to Techno and setting it aside, "Lets begin." He took the paper that Techno had set aside before clicking the record button on *Mellohi* .

"This is experiment 28, being overseen by me, Thomas Drystan. My older brother, Techno, is assisting me this time. As for our subject..." Tommy paced as he read off the papers, "Our *volunteer* for the experiment is Samuel Alvaro. Ex-military but now works as a school security officer. Age 25, he's a healthy, muscular young male with a height of 6'3 and a weight of 199.2 pounds." Tommy went to grab his camera and gestured for Techno to get out of frame, moving around and silently taking all sorts of different angled photos before standing and looking through each and every one. When he was satisfied, he set the camera aside.

There was a low groan and Tommy looked up to Sam with a satisfied smile, "Perfect, our subject is finally waking up. Sleep well Sam?"

"Wha....the fuck...?" The older man opened his eyes groggily, pulling at his wrists before he seemed to start becoming more conscious. His head snapped up and he looked around wildly before he stopped on Tommy, who stood there with a mocking smile. He tried to move, his face twisting with anger, "You- you-"

"Me!" Tommy yelled before laughing, "What is it Sam? Seriously, speak up- I'm listening!"

“Fuck- you really are a psycho-”

“A *psycho* ?” Tommy tilted his head, eyes searching Sam’s face, “No no no- I’m not a psycho, Sam. Now, my older brothers? My dad? Yea, no, they’re probably psychos. No offense, Tech.” Techno gave him an unamused and annoyed look before grumbling, “M not a psycho” while crossing his arms. Tommy smiled confidently, looking back to Sam, “No, Sam, I’m not a psycho. I just have a particular eye...” He hummed, before announcing, “See- you’re going to be participating in my testing trials! I’m trying to figure out a cure for Hemlock poisoning, and you get to test out my most recent formula.”

“Hemlock poisoning...? I...I don’t-”

“Oh I know. Don’t worry-” Tommy picked up the stems from earlier, looking at Sam as he paled, “Don’t look at me like that...I promise,” He walked closer and his features softened, looking almost sentimental, “This is for the good of others- think about how many animals and people this could cure if this works! And if you die- I’ll give you a really nice funeral, okay?”

“That- what the fuck-” Sam was speechless from the sheer honesty and sentiment Tommy displayed. As if he genuinely believed he was doing something good.

And maybe, in his mind, he really did.

“Now...let's get started, shall we?”

=x=

Quackity’s phone rang as he waited, staring at the file in silence. When it finally picked up, he heard an anxious voice on the other end, “Hello...?”

“Hello, my name is Quackity, I’m investigating the disappearance of Tubbo Medea. Am I speaking to Quig?” There was stuffy silence from the other end before the phone picked up shuffling, “Give me a second...” The teen muttered.

“Take all the time you need.”

He heard the sound of him covering his phone and yelling something before closing a door behind him, “First of all,” Quig’s voice rose for a second, seeming a bit angered, “Let's called it as it is, alright? They didn’t *disappear* , they were fucking kidnapped. Secondly,” He seemed to take a breath before sighing, “There’s...actually someone looking for them still...? I...I thought the police

just dropped the case..." He sounded exhausted and stressed with some undertone of hopelessness and sadness.

Quackity recognized that tone painfully well.

"I'm glad we're on the same page about the case then. As for the police...well, they sure have seemed to. But I'll let you in on a secret kid- i'm not working for the police, kid."

"What?" he heard the alarm in the teen's voice and he spoke quickly, "Relax relax- Listen, I have reason to believe that Tubbo's just the newest case in a large chain of disappearances and cold cases. Two of those cases were two close friends of mine. I'm conducting a private investigation into this stuff and I'm trying to locate them to reason to believe they're still alive."

More silence followed but Quig gulped, "O...okay...Say I *do* believe you...why are you calling me?"

"I just want to meet with you and ask you some questions about the day Tubbo was kidnapped. From what it says, you two were close."

"Yea...we've been friends since we were little. Next-door neighbors."

"Great. What do you say? I'm free tomorrow at 4 pm. It won't take long."

There's a groan and a stuttered breath before Quig answers, "Alright...Alright...see you then."
"Great. Thank you." Quackity hung up and flopped back, letting out a sigh of relief. That was two meetings in one day- both being potential major break-throughs...

He couldn't afford to mess this up.

Quackity set down the papers as Karl walked in, cocking his head, "You...look stressed."

"Is it that obvious?"

"Kinda, yea. Why don't you take a break?"

"A break...?" Quackity took a glance at his papers once more before sighing and nodding, getting up, "Yea. A break would be nice." Karl grinned widely, eyes lighting up, "Great- we could play something on my game console in my room- cmon!" He grabbed Quackity's arm and tugged him

along, making the noirette laugh a bit. Going down the hall, they turned into Karl's room and something immediately caught his eye.

"Why do you have a working traffic light in your room." Quackity asked, staring at the blinking traffic light in shock. Karl shrugged, "I really don't know. They were replacing the traffic lights and I asked if I could have it and the guy said yes, so, here we are." He answered nonchalantly.

Quackity blinked once, twice...

He broke out laughing.

This was starting to get ridiculous.

=x=

"40 minutes after subject has ingested the Hemlock and 20 minutes after the subject has ingested the test-cure; trembling has continued, he's drooling, pupils still dilated, and loss of speech has occurred...I suspect that the cure has sadly been a failure, but will be continuing to observe in case..." Tommy sighed in disappointment, his gloves now off as he sat with his head in hands, "Fucking...dammit...really thought it was gonna work this time..." He muttered.

Techno walked over and rubbed his back, "You'll get it eventually..."

He looked up at Sam, seeing him convulsing as he started choking on his own saliva before suddenly becoming stiff, then limp as he passed out. Frowning, Tommy shook his head, "I'm sorry Sam..."

Techno sighed, "Why don't you go to bed? I'll clean up and take care of the body, alright?" Tommy stared for a minute before nodding slowly and getting up, grabbing his recorder and speaking into it, "Experiment concluded as a failure...maybe I could try a different base...I don't know. End of tape." He clicked the stopped button before thanking Techno and heading up. It was dark upstairs, everyone else in bed, and as he headed to the second floor he checked in Wilbur's room. It was silent inside, and he turned the handle slowly as he peeked in.

Looking in, Tommy scanned the room until he saw the two on the bed. Tubbo looked fast asleep while curled against Wilbur's side, a pair of headphones on as Wilbur held his phone by his opposite side. Wilbur looked at total peace, arm wrapped around the younger and fingers combing through his hair. His eyes flickered over to Tommy, and as their eyes met there was almost a silent discussion between the two.

Without resistance, Wilbur lifted his other arm and Tommy slipped inside, shutting the door

quietly and crawling onto the bed. It felt almost childish- here he was, eighteen years old and yet after failing he was crawling into his older brother's bed like some little kid.

But Wilbur welcomes him like there hasn't been this massive disconnect from them butting heads ever since the accident. Wraps his arm around him and lets him lay his head on his chest while his hand rubs his back, and it sends Tommy so far back.

Tommy laid against Wilbur's chest, headphones on playing his favorite music, the oldest's fingers running through his hair and keeping him distracted.

They always did this. Wilbur always had Tommy sleep in his room when they knew Phil was angry. Not as a matter of protection, of course, more like the screaming from the 3rd floor being unbearable. Wilbur didn't mind them- he'd tortured and dissected enough people alive in the past 6 six years to be used to it; and to think, he was only 18 at the time.

But Tommy doesn't like to hear people in needless pain, so Wilbur would put his headphones on Tommy, blast music, and distract him. That was an obvious difference in their family. Tommy didn't like to cause pain if there was no reason for it. Sure, he caused it with his experiments, but those had purpose. Those had a goal to achieve.

Techno killed to release built up rage and anger he couldn't help. His patience had always been a thin strand.

Wilbur had a fascination with how much the human body could take before giving up. How dare you push the mentality of a person before they snap. He doubled his use in dissections by beginning to sell organs on the darkweb.

Tommy found a fascination in death. In the beauty of it, as well as the dread, and the capturing of final moments on camera...but not the pain. He wanted to find a way to ease the pain and maybe even heal it. Like trying to find a cure, even if he had to cause death to find it.

But Phil...

Tommy had never understood their father. He wasn't sure Techno or Wilbur did either. They tell him he used to be different before he was born, more patient and lenient, but as much as that was supposed to be a comfort to him, it really wasn't.

Because it made him feel like he was responsible for how Phil acted today.

"Another failure...?" Wilbur's voice is low, groggy, and slightly scratchy. It's clear he hasn't talked so much in a while.

"Yea..."

"I'm sorry Toms...you'll get it eventually. You're a smart kid, y'know..."

Tommy gripped onto Wilbur's shirt as his heart squeezed, eyes watering.

He had missed this side of his brother.

He smiled weakly, closing his eyes and soaking up the moment, "Thanks Wil...that means a lot. Really..."

=x=

Ranboo laid on the motel bed while fiddling with his phone, a lazy, muted look on his face. There was a soft ping and a twitter notification popping up, the name clear on the screen. He opened the messages and scrolled through them in silence.

(G)Enderman

Do you have any hobbies?

Big Man

Yea

I'm really into photography

And chemistry too

(G)Enderman

Oh cool, could I see any pictures?

Big Man

FUCK YEA

Give me all the opportunity to brag hell yea

(Sent 5 images)

Im pretty fucking good huh?

(G)Enderman

Mind sparing me some of that overzealous confidence? lol

But yea, those are really impressive.

Ranboo opened the first image to inspect it more thoroughly. It had a clear black and white filter on it, the subject being a gravestone on a hill. It looked old, the engraved letters were darkened and worn, the shape being one of those crosses, and it was clear there was a grim, moody vibe to the photo.

The second was of an older looking cow with what looked like a red tie hanging loosely around its neck, pieces of hay sticking out of its mouth as it looked totally at peace in a field of tall grass. There was a warmer, more intriguing vibe to this one. Like it was capturing a beautiful moment.

The third was of a figure looking back at the camera with the sunset in the background. The figure had fluffy brown hair with a crown of white flowers, wearing a white loose dress shirt that tucked into a mossy green long waist high skirt. They had a laughing smile on their face while their eyes were hidden behind shades, one hand holding an edge of the skirt up. The sunset created an almost ethereal glow around them, and the photo had an endearing feel to it.

The fourth was in the redwood forest, the massive trees looming and casting dark shadows as god rays peeked through the dense leaves above. This one had the silhouette of a man leaning back with one foot up against a tree, a guitar in his arms with his head down. The man looked so small and insignificant to the trees around him, yet at the same time seemed to carry a sort of...weight. There was this air of mystery on this one.

The fifth was of what looked like a human skull laying in a ring of lush, bright flowers. There was a snake coming from one of the sockets, looking like it wanted to strike at the camera...

Ranboo shivered and exited from the picture.

(G)Enderman

Where do you wanna meet up tomorrow by the way?

Big Man

Does Townsquare sound good?

(G)Enderman

Yep

Big Man

Cool.

I have homework to do now.

Night!

(G)Enderman

Night

Ranboo set the phone on his chest and sighed as he stared at the ceiling. There was something...weird about this Tommy kid. At first he had just thought it to be nerves or awkwardness, but now he was more unsure.

Hearing his mother grumble, he looked over to Puffy, seeing her still looking at the files. Part of him was tempted to walk over and help her, but he knew better. She was tired, so it was best to either stay away or force her to sleep.

He also knew that the second one wouldn't go over well.

So instead, he resorted to turning on his side and setting his phone on the stand, taking a breath and shutting his eyes.

Tomorrow was another day.

Tomorrow will be more eventful...

New Findings.

Chapter Notes

I swear i'm not dead!

Thank you all for being so patient- I just started college around a month or so ago, and so far it's been highly demanding of my attention. Regardless, I've finally gotten this chapter done, so I hope you enjoy! <3

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<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

Flipping through his notes, Quackity's stomach was twisting as Karl drove. He'd been so sure about this before, but now his mind was second guessing. His questions weren't too stupid, right?

Of course they weren't. Karl said they were smart, and Karl wouldn't lie to him...

He hoped.

Last night was fun. It had really allowed him to mellow out a bit after so many days of stressing out. Karl was good company, and honestly Quackity was considering asking him on a proper date after this was all over; if it ever *was* over.

Turning his head out the window, he took note that they were getting closer, and he glanced at George in the back. Frowning, he noticed the blanket slipping off his sleeping body and carefully reached back to pull it over him again. Quackity had recently taken note of George's odd behaviors.

George was horrendously bad at hiding things, and it was clear something was looming over him despite how much he'd tried to hide it. His lack of sleep had caused dark circles under his eyes that he'd hidden behind his sunglasses. He constantly was fidgeting and gripped his phone like a junkie with its last hit. He jumped at the littlest things like shadows and small bumps, and he hid his phone screen from them constantly.

Then there was the situation with him cutting his hand...

Quackity wanted to know what was up with that, but neither Karl- much less George- would talk about it.

Nothing about it sat right with him, and he needed to figure out what was going on there. Something in his gut told him it had something to do with the case, even just a little bit.

Spotting the address, he sat up, tapping the window, "Here." Karl slowed the car until it pulled to a stop by the house, and Quackity gathered his notes and phone, opening the door. Looking back, Quackity took a breath, "Do you wanna come in too? It could be helpful to have a second head..."

Karl lit up a bit before faltering, "I'd love to, but..." He gestured to George in the back and Quackity shrugged, "Crack open the windows for air and then lock the car. He's got water and had breakfast, and we'll only be a good hour or so."

Karl grinned, nodding before turning off the car and getting out. He locked it and ran over to Quackity as he walked over to the house, taking it all in.

It was fairly standard, a small two-story with oxide daisies in the front garden in a nice neighborhood. Walking to the front door, Quackity clicked the doorbell and Karl bounced on his heels.

The door opened to reveal a tall man with dark brown hair, glasses, and in a white dress shirt and black dress pants. He smiled widely at Quackity, holding a hand out, "Howdy, Quackity, right?"

"Yep! Ted?" Quackity shook his hand briefly before Karl repeated the motion, Ted motioning them inside, "You betcha! Come in, come in! Charlie is making Jell-o!"

" *Goop* !!" Corrected another voice playfully from inside. Ted snorted and rolled his eyes, "Sorry, Charlie likes to call Jell-o *goop* ..." He mumbled with a fond smile, making them giggle. Quackity looked around, noting how their house smelled fondly of fresh Apple fritters, and there was a warm feeling of love in the house.

They passed a rectangular table in the hall that had all sorts of framed photos with the couple and even what Quackity assumed to be friends. There were two photos that included someone who looked like Schlatt, slightly dating the two photos as being before the man's disappearance.

Ted led them into the living room, where Slime was setting a bowl of jell-o cubes in the middle of a coffee table. The dirty blond looked up at them and smiled, bright eye'd, "Hiya! Would you two like anything to drink?"

"If you have it- ice tea would be fine with me- Karl?"

"Water is fine!"

Quackity sat down on the couch, gesturing for Karl to follow along. Slime sped to the kitchen, the plan being open-walled so they could see in, and opened the fridge. Looking around, the living room was pretty modern looking, and as Slime walked back to the living room and gave them their drinks, he rambled mindlessly, "Hope you don't mind the goop thing- it's just that I have this weird thing where if I don't snack on something every hour or so, I get weirdly mean and cranky. Even if I've had a big meal! So I just make a new batch every few days I run out so I can snack on em."

Quackity waved it off, "It's fine, that's understandable. I'm just appreciative of you guys being willing to talk to me."

Slime sat down on the opposite side of Quackity with a small glass bowl, beginning to scoop some of the green jell-o into it while Ted leaned on the back of the couch behind him, "No problem. We were a bit surprised by your voicemail since- well it's been a good...around 2 years, I think? But we're happy to help in whatever ways we can."

"Greet- I already have some questions lined up, so whenever you're ready..."

The two looked at each other before nodding, and Slime smiled, "We're ready- and, just for future reference, you can just call me Charlie. Slimecicle is my maiden name- nicknamed Slime for short."

"Understood..." Quackity set his phone on the table, beginning recording, "Please state your names for the record."

"Charlie and Ted Mason."

"Perfect, and you consent to being recorded for this interview?" Both of them confirmed, and Quackity began, "So, first off is that we do have a suspect, but not his identity. Just a vague description of his appearance and exhibited behavior from the account of a woman who was with Schlatt the night he disappeared; Minx."

"More than the cops ever got. Shoot, man."

"First question; A man named Traves noted that this suspect's described behavior lined up with

how Slime- or, sorry, Charlie acts when off his meds. However he could not remember what the meds were for. Do you mind telling me what he had meant? I understand it's a very private and personal question, but it could be a very vital detail to trying to find this suspect."

Charlie chuckled half-awkwardly, "You're fine- uhh- I take medication that is prescribed from my psychiatrist."

"Could you describe to me what this is, and what it is for?"

"Clozapine. It's what's called a second generation antipsychotic medication, and it's to treat my Schizophrenia."

"Schizophrenia?" Quackity tilted his head, and Charlie rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly, "Yea. I know. I may not look like it right now, but I can assure you I most definitely have it and have been given the diagnosis."

Quackity nodded slowly, "Got it. Alright, well, can either of you describe to me from a *personal* ," he gestured to Charlie, "Point of view when off your meds, as well as an *outsider's* ," He then gestured to Ted, "Point of view when off your meds. This is simply for comparison's sake." "Well..." Charlie fiddled with his fingers and bit his lip anxiously, "It's...hard to explain, but...when I'm off it, I guess I'm more paranoid? Scared? I'm much more susceptible to believing untrue things..."

"For a while-" Ted started, only to pause, and he looked softly at Charlie, "Do you mind if I...?" Charlie relaxed a bit, and Quackity's heart twisted a bit at the fondness in both their eyes, "Go ahead."

Ted grinned, "Well, for a while, Charlie got caught up in this lizard conspiracy..." Quackity listened with amusement, until his ears caught something particular, "Wait- say that again?"

"Me and Swagger?"

"I'm sorry to interrupt but- You two know Swagger as well?"

"Well, through connections, yea."

"Swagger was the second person to have been there before Schlatt was kidnapped. According to Minx, he saw our culprit too."

Charlie and Ted looked surprised, exchanging a look before offering, "Well, if you want, we can direct you to him? He's a local."

Quackity nodded quickly, "That would be fantastic, here-" He handed Charlie his pen and notepad, and the blond jotted down the number as Ted spoke, "Swagger owns a nice strip joint on the other side of town. He's a blunt but nice guy." Quackity nodded and took back the notepad and looked over the phone number, "Thank you- this really helps..."

"It's no problem!"

With a soft sigh, Quackity took a breath, "Alright, just a few more questions, and then I'm out of your hair."

"Shoot."

=x=

Bad stares at the object in Phil's hand suspiciously, hands trembling as he did. His eyes flicker between Phil and the small cell, throat tight, and Phil seemed amused by his turmoil, "Well? Aren't you going to take it?"

Bad resisted.

He took a step back and glared at Phil, "Why would you give me a phone?"

He saw a glint in Phil's eye as a slow smirk danced across his lips, "You see, this is why you're my favorite, Dove." He walked closer, reaching out and stroking Bad's cheek with his knuckle, head tilting, "You're so *smart*."

His finger trailed down and grabbed his chin firmly, snapping his head up so that Bad had to look him in the eyes. Bad feels his stomach churn when Phil's thumb slowly traces his bottom lip, deep blue orbs darkened, "You're less like a Dove, more like..." He hummed, tilting his head a bit, as if thinking, before he drawled out lowly, "More like a *crow*." A low chuckle came from him, as if it was entertaining to him and him alone, "Maybe I should call you that from now on. Crow."

He seemed to think for another second before sighing, "No, No...It doesn't roll off the tongue as well." He let go and stepped away, and Bad finally took a breath that he wasn't aware he'd been holding, "Now, as for the phone..." He held it up, "It's completely useless for calls both in and out. The only thing it works for are some word scramble games and candy crush- I think digital chess, too. *That's* why I'm giving it to you."

Bad gave him a look that screamed, ‘there *has* to be more than that.’, and Phil snickered, tapping Bad on the nose with it gently, “Call it a reward. You’ve earned it.” He dropped the phone in Bad’s hands, “I had another reward for you tomorrow, but this is all for now.” He turned and walked to the bedroom door, gesturing out, “Now, I believe Techno *really* is anxious to see you...”

Bad gripped the phone tightly, his stomach turning. He didn’t trust any of this- but what choice did he have? He didn’t want to even *dare* denying Phil...

He stepped out of the bedroom and gave Phil a cautious over-the-shoulder glance, only for the older man to return it with a razor sharp smile and shutting the door. Bad walked out and down the stairs, heading to Techno’s door almost out of habit. He rapped his knuckles against the sturdy door and it was almost immediately flung open. Bad squeaked as he was pulled into a crushing hug, the larger muttering incoherently as he shakily hugged back. He noted the disarray his room was in, a nearly guilty feeling swelling in his heart, “H-hey Tech...”

Techno let out a whimper that was almost puppy-like, burying his face in his neck, and Bad shushed him softly, “Hey...h-hey, I’m okay, i’m right here.”

When the grip got tighter, Bad sighed, attempting to relax into him as he thought to himself, ‘Looks like he’s not letting go any time soon...’

=x=

Ranboo watched as people passed through the park. He had to admit, the park in such a small town was a lot less crowded and more peaceful than the park where they used to live. There’s a sense of calm that washes over him, and he’s honestly just happy to finally have gotten out of their stuffy motel.

The soft click of a camera shutter catches him off guard, and he looks to the side to see Tommy looking at his camera with a smile, “Um...Hi?” He speaks up, and Tommy looks up with a smile, “You know, you’re really photogenic.”

Ranboo flushed a bit, raising a brow, “Really?”

“Yea! See?” He rounded the bench and plopped down beside him, showing him the photo he’d taken with a bright smile and pointing things over, “You’ve got nice cheekbones, and your eyes always have this nice far-off look in them. You’ve got a strong jawline too-”

Ranboo laughed, “Okay, okay- I think I get your point. But- uh- maybe we can keep the surprise photos to a minimum? I’m..not really big on people taking pictures of me.”

Tommy gave him a semi-lost look, tilting his head, “Why not? You’re really handsome, and the best pictures can come from being in the moment-” Ranboo shook his head, “That’s not the point. The point is that some people- like me- are uncomfortable with having their photo taken, good-looking or not. It’s not okay to just walk up to someone and take their picture.”

Silent, Tommy lowered his camera, seeming to be letting Ranboo’s words soak for a moment. It was a bit odd to Ranboo, such a concept was something he’d perceived to be common, but Tommy had already proven to be a bit of an odd-ball. After a bit, he nodded softly, “Yea...yea okay, I think I get it-”

“Great.” Ranboo flashed him a smile and stood up, Tommy following, and chirped, “Now! You wanna get this tour on the road?”

Tommy lit up, “Yea! C’mon-”

=x=

“Thank you again for meeting me.”

“It’s...no problem.” Quig looked uncomfortable. Quackity could observe dark circles under his eyes, and he can’t imagine how much the situation must’ve been tearing at the teens insides. Quig was reportedly the second person Tubbo had talked to about the stalking business and he was Tubbo’s best friend, so he must’ve felt some guilt about the disappearance.

“I’ll try to make this quick, okay? Do you wanna walk around while we talk?”

Quig nodded softly, and Quackity began walking, deciding they would lap around the school, “Do you consent to this interview being recorded?”

“Mhm...”

“Great.” He took out his phone and started recording, “Please state your name for the record...”
“Quig Jones...”

Quackity nodded, “Alright, this is probably obvious, but was there anything different about Tubbo the day he disappeared.”

Quig hung his head, a dark look in his eyes, “A..at first, not really. It was a normal day. I headed to his house and he showed off his new look. He dyed his hair to this natural brown, and he was wearing overall shorts and this long sleeve shirt...” His voice cracked and he tightened his jaw, “I-i...It was only until later that anything was different. He completely freaked- was broken into tears and everything, said that some guy was stalking him...I didn’t believe it until he showed me the pictures.”

“The pictures?”

“Sam took them- he still has them, I think...It was a bunch of creepy distant pictures of Tubbo.” Quackity nodded. He’d have to ask Sam about those photos later...

“Hm, okay...”

Quackity kept the questions simple, knowing Quig wouldn’t have *too* many answers. As time passed, they circled around the school and came back to the front, stopping at the area where people could drive up and pick up their kids. As they walked, Quig seemed to spot something in the corner of his eye and shut up entirely, turning to look at it, “H-hold on-” He walked over to where concrete met the grass, and Quackity spotted a golden hair-clip in the grass. Quig looked pale, “T...that’s Tubbo’s.”

“What?” The noirette asked, shaken, “H-hold on-” he dug in his pocket for his glove and a plastic baggy, “Don’t touch it, it could be evidence-” He put on the glove and walked over, carefully picking it up. Observing it, he could see it was a jeweled bee, and he looked at Quig, “And you’re sure that it’s Tubbo’s?”

Quig nodded, looking like he was about to cry, “P-positive- I’m the one who put it in his hair that morning. It- it was to keep his bangs out of his eyes, and it was a g-good luck charm-” Quackity nodded sympathetically and put it in the plastic baggie, zipping it tight and taking off his gloves. He walked over and put a hand on Quig’s shoulder, squeezing it gently, “I think we’re done here, okay? You head on home- you’ve really helped a lot...” Quig nodded shakily, sniffing, and Quackity helped walk him back to his car. His mom rolled the window down and thanked him, and Quackity waved him off before heading back to Karl’s car. Opening the door, he pulled himself up and held up the baggie as George- now having woken up- and Karl looked at it curiously, “Gentlemen, I think we might have two more leads...”

Call's to make & Tingling suspicion.

Chapter Notes

Jesus, its been far too long since I've updated.
I'm so sorry y'all-

I have a category in my server dedicated to this fic, and where I talk and show snippets of other au's of mine, so come on in! I'd love to meet y'all and hear feedback, plus you get notifications about new chapters the moment it's updated!
<https://discord.gg/G648NWcG7q>

“Thank you again for your cooperation, I really appreciate it...” As the door shut behind her, Puffy sighed, walking down the steps. She checked her notepad, reading over her notes again as she walked down the sidewalk. “It’s been days, and still nothing...” She muttered out loud to herself, coming to a pause at a bus stop. She tucked away her notes, and took out her phone to dial a familiar number. She looked around as she waited, only to pause as she saw a flyer, approaching it curiously and reading it outloud to herself.

“Any info on the following cases- Johnthan Schlatt, Bad Halo, Skeppy, Tubbo...Call Quackity at 888-920-5786...” Puffy raised a brow, and the call went to voicemail, making her sigh, “Dammit Sam, what is going on with you...?” Tsking, she dialed the number on the flyer, and waited.

=x=

Quackity sat staring at the board they’d put together in the living room when his phone went off, making him jump. He looked at the number before answering, “Hello, Quackity here?”

“Yea, I saw your flyer- do you have the license to be doing this?” Quackity paled, beginning to sweat, “Uh...N...no- but-”

“Are the local police involved?”

Beginning to be riled up by the accusatory tone, Quackity snapped, “No? They’re useless-!”
“Good, then we can agree on that. How many leads have your little flyers gotten you?” Anxiety gnawed at his guts- how could he trust this person? He had no clue who was on the other side of the line...

“What's it to you?”

There's a small chuckle of what he hopes is approval on the other side of the line, "Smart. Tell you what kid- meet me at Manifold park tomorrow at 3 pm, out in the open. Bring buddies if you don't trust me. My name's Puffy Beloved. I can help you, but only if you help me."

"Wh-" Before he could ask, Puffy hung up, and he felt a bit sick. Could he trust this person?? He hadn't a single clue who they were...

But...They could help him.

Well, fuck it. He hadn't gotten this far without taking leaps of faith. Besides- Quackity glanced at his notepad, seeing Swagger's number written there- he had a few more phone calls to make.

=x=

"So you play minecraft too?"

"From time to time, yea! It's a fun little passtime..." Ranboo took another bite of his sandwich, finding the blond's excitement infectious. Tommy beamed, swallowing his own bite rather harshly, "My brother, Wilbur, he used to play too, but he doesn't anymore. Same with playing guitar- but- maybe we could play some time?! It's a bit lonely playing all by myself, so..."

"I don't see why not, it seems like it could be fun..."

Getting to know Tommy was honestly a bit of a chore, but Ranboo liked him. He could tell the younger one hadn't really had friends before, which was strange, but he didn't like to push on why that was.

After their lunch, the two of them finished walking through the town. Ranboo got to see the theatre, the mall, the police station-

It was so odd to him how different things were here compared to the city. Everything was so tight knit and close...

As he nibbled on a piece of grape rock candy on a stick that Tommy bought and gave him, he wondered how in the world so many people- including a teenage boy- could go missing for so long. How someone could keep a live person hidden or a dead body undiscovered was beyond him.

As it gets dark, he and Tommy chat until an old pickup truck pulls up to the bench they sat on. Tommy lights up as it stops, and the window rolls down to reveal a much older man, who leans his head out of the window with a friendly smile, "Toms! Who's your lil' friend?"

“This is Ranboo, dad!”

Ranboo’s always had...this sense about people.

Getting up, he reaches him and tightly grasps the man in the truck's hand, shaking it, “Nice to meet you, sir.”

Dark blue eyes narrow a bit, trying to search the shapes behind his shades to no avail. “Firm handshake you’ve got there.” He comments, his smile a little less friendly as he takes his hand back.

Ranboo shoves his own hand in his pocket, shrugging, “I’ve been told I’m strong for how skinny I look.”

“Hm.”

After a second more of eye contact, Ranboo turns and suddenly hugs Tommy before ruffling his hair, “This was seriously fun, text me when you get home, okay? Maybe we’ll have time to play some minecraft.”

Any confusion the younger once felt was now dissipated, shifting into childish excitement, “Okay!” He rounded the truck, climbing in, and Ranboo nodded to Tommy’s father, “It was nice meeting you too, sir.”

“The feelings are mutual. You walkin’?”

“Yep.”

“Be careful then. Lots of people have been going missing at night recently.”

Something in Ranboo’s gut twisted. Why did that sound more like a threat rather than a warning?

....

Maybe it *was* a threat.

He laughed it off, keeping a warm facade, “I’m sure I’ll be just fine, but thanks for the warning anyway.” He began walking when he heard no response, the man rolling up the window, and an eerie cloud hung over him. Eventually, the truck drove off, and Ranboo plunged into thought. That was...definitely weird. Tommy’s father was definitely someone who Ranboo just got a bad feeling from- there was something about that friendly front that just felt fake.

Perhaps...he was reading it wrong?

...But he has never been wrong about this stuff. His gut has always been right when it’s come to strangers.

As he reached him and his mother’s room, he unlocked it, walked in, and locked it behind him. Something about that man felt the bad kind of familiar- he just didn’t know what...

Maybe his mom could help him figure it out.

....Whenever she would be getting back.

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